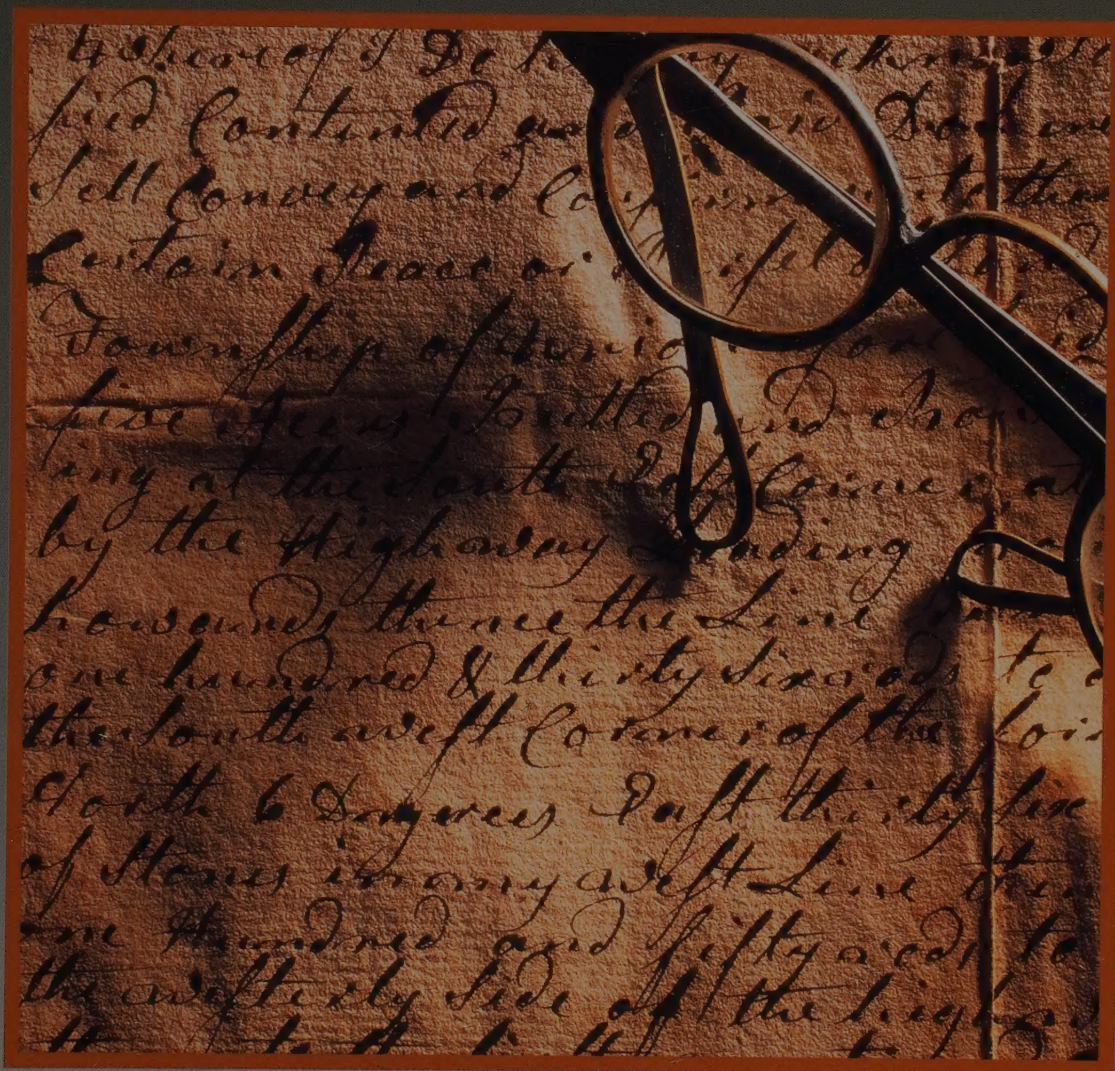


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# The Liberator (1831)

WILLIAM LLOYD  
GARRISON

Until 1831, most Americans who opposed slavery favored some slow, gradual process for ending the institution, such as sending freed slaves to Africa. On the first day of 1831, an opponent of slavery, William Lloyd Garrison, changed the entire nature of the discussion. In his new newspaper, *The Liberator*, Garrison called for the immediate, unqualified termination of an obvious evil. With others who shared his radical perspective, Garrison was soon labeled an abolitionist and a militant. This opening statement by the editor catapulted Garrison into notoriety and made him the most hated man among Southern slave owners. *The Liberator* ceased publication in December 1865, shortly after the passage of the thirteenth amendment outlawing slavery in the United States.

## Questions to Consider

- Why did Garrison abandon gradualism?
- Did Garrison's militancy aggravate tensions between the North and the South?

## To The Public

In the month of August, I issued proposals for publishing "THE LIBERATOR" in Washington City; but the enterprise, though hailed in different sections of the country, was palsied by public indifference. Since that time, the removal of the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*<sup>1</sup> to the Seat of Government has rendered less imperious the establishment of a similar periodical in that quarter.

During my recent tour for the purpose of exciting the minds of the people by a series of discourses on the subject of slavery, every place that I visited gave fresh evidence of the fact, that a greater revolution in public sentiment was to be effected in the free States—and particularly in New-England—than at the South. I found contempt more bitter, opposition more active, de-

traction more relentless, prejudice more stubborn, and apathy more frozen, than among slave-owners themselves. Of course, there were individual exceptions to the contrary. This state of things afflicted, but did not dishearten me. I determined, at every hazard, to lift up the standard of emancipation in the eyes of the nation, within sight of Bunker Hill and in the birthplace of liberty. That standard is now unfurled; and long may it float, unhurt by the spoliations of time or the missiles of a desperate foe—yea, till every chain be broken, and every bondman set free! Let Southern oppressors tremble—let their secret abettors tremble—let their Northern apologists tremble—let all the enemies of the persecuted blacks tremble.

...I shall not array myself as the political partisan of any man. In defending the great cause of human rights, I wish to derive the assistance of all religions and of all parties.

Assenting to the "self-evident truth" maintained in the American Declaration of Independence, "that all men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights—among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," I shall strenu-

Source: Wendell Phillips and Francis Jackson Garrison, eds., *William Lloyd Garrison 1805–1879* (New York, 1885), 1: pp. 224–226.

<sup>1</sup> Another anti-slavery journal.—Ed.

ously contend for the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population. In Park-Street Church, on the Fourth of July, 1829, in an address on slavery, I unreflectingly assented to the popular but pernicious doctrine of gradual abolition. I seize this opportunity to make a full and unequivocal recantation, and thus publicly to ask pardon of my God, of my country, and of my brethren the poor slaves, for having uttered a sentiment so full of timidity, injustice, and absurdity.... My conscience is now satisfied.

I am aware that many object to the severity of my language; but is there not cause for severity? I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject, I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. No! no! Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen;—but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—AND I WILL BE HEARD. The apathy of the people is enough to make every statue leap from its pedestal, and to hasten the resurrection of the dead.

It is pretended, that I am retarding the cause of emancipation by the coarseness of my invective and the precipitancy of my measures. The charge is not true. On this question my influence,—humble as it is,—is felt at this moment to a considerable extent, and shall be felt

in coming years—not perniciously, but beneficially—not as a curse, but as a blessing; and posterity will bear testimony that I was right. I desire to thank God, that he enables me to disregard “the fear of man which bringeth a snare,” and to speak his truth in its simplicity and power. And here I close with this fresh dedication:

Oppression! I have seen thee, face to face,  
And met thy cruel eye and cloudy brow;  
But thy soul-withering glance I fear not now—  
For dread to prouder feelings doth give place  
Of deep abhorrence! Scorning the disgrace  
Of slavish knees that at thy footstool bow,  
I also kneel—but with far other vow  
Do hail thee and thy herd of hirelings base:—  
I swear, while life-blood warms my throbbing veins,  
Still to oppose and thwart, with heart and hand,  
Thy brutalising sway—till Afric’s chains  
Are burst, and Freedom rules the rescued land,—  
Trampling Oppression and his iron rod:  
Such is the vow I take—so HELP ME GOD!<sup>2</sup>

Boston, January 1, 1831.

<sup>2</sup> This sonnet is by Thomas Pringle, the Scottish poet and Secretary of the London Society for the Abolition of Slavery.—Ed.

## 2

## *The Pro-Slavery Argument* (1832)

T H O M A S R . D E W

Thomas R. Dew, the distinguished professor of political economy at the College of William and Mary, was appalled when the Virginia legislature debated abolishing slavery in 1829. In the aftermath of Nat Turner's rebellion in 1831, the legislature again discussed the advisability of continuing the institution of slavery. Professor Dew could remain silent no longer and rushed to the defense of slavery. His long essay, originally published as “Review of the Debate in the Virginia



Legislature, 1831–'32," was often reprinted by supporters of slavery over the next thirty years.

### Questions to Consider

- What did Dew find to be the economic advantages of slavery?
- Was there any reason to address the morality of slavery?

...Advantages which have resulted to the world from the institution of slavery.—When we turn our thoughts from this world “of imperfections” to the God of nature, we love to contemplate Him as perfect and immaculate, and amid all the divine attributes with which we delight to clothe Him, none stands more conspicuous than his *benevolence*. To look upon Him in this light, may be said to be almost the impulse of an instinct of our nature, and the most enlarged experience and perfect knowledge combine in fortifying and strengthening this belief. Accordingly, when we look abroad to the works of Omnipotence, when we contemplate the external, the physical world, and again, when we turn to the world of mind, we never find evil the sole object and end of creation. Happiness is always the main design; evil is merely incidental. All the laws of matter, every principle, and even passion of man, when rightly understood, demonstrate the general benevolence of the Deity, even in this world. “It is, perhaps,” says Mr. Allison, “the most striking and the most luminous fact in the history of our intellectual nature, that that principle of Curiosity which is the instinctive spring of all scientific inquiry into the phenomena of matter or mind, is never satisfied until it terminates in the discovery, not only of design, but of benevolent design.” Well, then, might we have concluded, from the fact that slavery was the necessary result of the laws of mind and matter, that it marked some benevolent design, and was intended by our Creator for some useful purpose. Let us inquire, then, what that useful purpose is, and we have no hesitation in affirming that slavery has been, perhaps, the principal means for impelling forward the civilization of mankind. Without its agency, society must have remained sunk into that deplorable state of barbarism and wretchedness which characterized the inhabitants of the Western World, when first discovered by Columbus....

Strange as it may seem, we have little hesitation in declaring it as our opinion, that a much greater number

of Indians, within the limits of the United States, would have been saved had we rigidly persevered in enslaving them, than by our present policy.... Slavery, we assert again, seems to be the only means that we know of, under heaven, by which the ferocity of the savage can be conquered, his wandering habits eradicated, his slothfulness and improvidence—by which, in fine, his nature can be changed. The Spaniards enslaved the Indians in South-America, and they were the most cruel and relentless of masters. Still, under their system of cruel and harsh discipline, an infinitely larger proportion of the aborigines were saved than with us, and will, no doubt, in the lapse of ages, mix and harmonize with the Europeans, and be, in all respects, their equals....

*Influence of slavery on the condition of the female sex.*—The bare name of this interesting half of the human family, is well calculated to awaken in the breast of the generous the feeling of tenderness and kindness. The wrongs and sufferings of meek, quiet, forbearing woman, awaken the generous sympathy of every noble heart.... [H]er sexual organization, and the part which she takes in bringing forth and nurturing the rising generation, render her necessarily domestic in her habits, and timid and patient in her sufferings. If a man choose to exercise his power against woman, she is sure to fall an easy prey to his oppression. Hence, we may always consider her progressing elevation in society as a mark of advancing civilization, and, more particularly, of the augmentation of disinterested and generous virtue. The lot of women, among savages, has always been found to be painful and degrading....

...The labor of the slave thus becomes a substitute for that of the woman; man no longer wanders through the forest, in quest of game; and woman, consequently, is relieved from following on his track, under the enervating and harassing burden of her children. She is now surrounded by her domestics, and the abundance of their labor lightens the toil and hardships of the whole family. She ceases to be a mere “beast of burden;” becomes the cheering and animating centre of the family circle—time is afforded for reflection and the cultivation of all those mild and fascinating virtues, which throw a charm and delight around our homes and firesides, and calm and tranquillize the harsher tempers

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Source: *The Pro-Slavery Argument, as Maintained by the Most Distinguished Writers of the Southern States* (Philadelphia, 1853), pp. 324–325, 332–333, 336–339, 451–452.

and more restless propensities of the male: Man, too, relieved from that endless disquietude about subsistence for the morrow—relieved of the toil of wandering over the forest—more amply provided for by the productions of the soil—finds his habits changed, his temper moderated, his kindness and benevolence increased; he loses that savage and brutal feeling which he had before indulged towards all his unfortunate dependents; and, consequently, even the slave, in the agricultural, is happier than the free man in the hunting state....

*Injustice and Evils of Slavery.*—1st. It is said slavery is wrong, in the abstract at least, and contrary to the spirit of Christianity. To this we answer as before, that any question must be determined by its circumstances, and if, as really is the case, we cannot get rid of slavery without producing a greater injury to both the masters and slaves, there is no rule of conscience or revealed law of God which can condemn us.... So, if slavery had commenced even contrary to the laws of God and man, and the sin of its introduction rested upon our heads, and it was even carrying forward the nation by slow degrees to final ruin—yet, if it were certain that an attempt to remove it would only hasten and heighten the final

catastrophe—that...no legislation could safely remove [it], then we would not only not be found to attempt the extirpation, but we would stand guilty of a high offense in the sight of both God and man, if we should rashly make the effort. But the original sin of introduction rested not on our heads....

With regard to the assertion that slavery is against the spirit of Christianity, we are ready to admit the general assertion, but deny most positively, that there is any thing in the Old or New Testament, which would go to show that slavery, when once introduced, ought at all events to be abrogated, or that the master commits any offense in holding slaves. The children of Israel themselves were slaveholders, and were not condemned for it....

When we turn to the New Testament, we find not one single passage at all calculated to disturb the conscience of an honest slaveholder. No one can read it without seeing and admiring that the meek and humble Savior of the world in no instance meddled with the established institutions of mankind; he came to save a fallen world and not to excite the black passions of men and array them in deadly hostility against each other....

### 3

## *Democracy in America* (1835)

ALEXIS DE  
TOCQUEVILLE

Probably no visitor to the United States has had as powerful an intellectual impact as did Alexis de Tocqueville. Tocqueville came to America in 1831 with Gustave de Beaumont to study the prison system in the United States. During their nine-month journey, the two French aristocrats became fascinated with the democratic culture of the new nation. In 1835 Tocqueville published the first part of his massive study *Democracy in America*. It was instantly recognized as a brilliant examination of the strengths and potential weaknesses not just of the United States, but of democracy itself. To this day American political leaders maintain the centrality of Tocqueville in the development of their own understanding of the nation.



### Questions to Consider

- What is the tyranny of the majority and how does it operate?
- How can this tyranny be prevented?
- Was the United States a real democracy in the 1830s?

## The Limited Power of the Majority in the United States, and Its Consequences

...The very essence of democratic government consists in the absolute sovereignty of the majority; for there is nothing in democratic states which is capable of resisting it. Most of the American Constitutions have sought to increase this natural strength of the majority by artificial means.

The legislature is, of all political institutions, the one which is most easily swayed by the wishes of the majority. The Americans determined that the members of the legislature should be elected by the people immediately, and for a very brief term, in order to subject them, not only to the general convictions, but even to the daily passions of their constituents. The members of both Houses are taken from the same class in society, and are nominated in the same manner; so that the modifications of the legislative bodies are almost as rapid and quite as irresistible as those of a single assembly. It is to a legislature thus constituted, that almost all the authority of the Government has been entrusted.

But whilst the law increased the strength of those authorities which of themselves were strong, it enfeebled more and more those which were naturally weak. It deprived the representatives of the executive of all stability and independence; and by subjecting them completely to the caprices of the legislature, it robbed them of the slender influence which the nature of a democratic government might have allowed them to retain. In several States, the judicial power was also submitted to the elective discretion of the majority; and in all of them its existence was made to depend on the pleasure of the legislative authority, since the representatives were empowered annually to regulate the stipend of the Judges.

Custom, however, has done even more than law. A proceeding which will in the end set all the guarantees of representative government at naught, is becoming

more and more general in the United States; it frequently happens that the electors, who choose a delegate, point out a certain line of conduct to him, and impose upon him a certain number of positive obligations which he is pledged to fulfil. With the exception of the tumult, this comes to the same thing as if the majority of the populace held its deliberations in the marketplace.

Several other circumstances concur in rendering the power of the majority in America, not only preponderant, but irresistible. The moral authority of the majority is partly based upon the notion, that there is more intelligence and more wisdom in a great number of men collected together than in a single individual, and that the quantity of legislators is more important than their quality. The theory of equality is in fact applied to the intellect of man; and human pride is thus assailed in its last retreat, by a doctrine which the minority hesitate to admit, and in which they very slowly concur. Like all other powers, and perhaps more than all other powers, the authority of the many requires the sanction of time; at first it enforces obedience by constraint; but its laws are not respected until they have long been maintained.

The right of governing society, which the majority supposes itself to derive from its superior intelligence, was introduced into the United States by the first settlers; and this idea, which would be sufficient of itself to create a free nation, has now been amalgamated with the manners of the people, and the minor incidents of social intercourse.

The French, under the old monarchy, held it for a maxim, (which is still a fundamental principle of the English Constitution,) that the King could do no wrong; and if he did do wrong, the blame was imputed to his advisers. This notion was highly favourable to habits of obedience; and it enabled the subject to complain of the law, without ceasing to love and honour the lawgiver. The Americans entertain the same opinion with respect to the majority.

The moral power of the majority is founded upon yet another principle, which is, that the interests of the many are to be preferred to those of the few. It will readily be perceived that the respect here professed for the rights of the majority must naturally increase or dimin-

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Source: Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve (2 vols.; London, 1838), 2: pp. 76–93, 98–113, 120–137.

ish according to the state of parties. When a nation is divided into several irreconcilable factions, the privilege of the majority is often overlooked, because it is intolerable to comply with its demands....

In America the authority exercised by the legislative bodies is supreme; nothing prevents them from accomplishing their wishes with celerity, and with irresistible power, whilst they are supplied by new representatives every year. That is to say, the circumstances which contribute most powerfully to democratic instability, and which admit of the free application of caprice to every object in the State, are here in full operation. In conformity with this principle, America is, at the present day, the country in the world where laws last the shortest time. Almost all the American constitutions have been amended within the course of thirty years: there is therefore not a single American State which has not modified the principles of its legislation in that lapse of time. As for the laws themselves, a single glance upon the archives of the different States of the Union suffices to convince one, that in America the activity of the legislator never slackens. Not that the American democracy is naturally less stable than any other, but that it is allowed to follow its capricious propensities in the formation of the laws.

The omnipotence of the majority, and the rapid as well as absolute manner in which its decisions are executed in the United States, has not only the effect of rendering the law unstable, but it exercises the same influence upon the execution of the law and the conduct of the public administration. As the majority is the only power which it is important to court, all its projects are taken up with the greatest ardour; but no sooner is its attention distracted, than all this ardour ceases; whilst in the free states of Europe, the administration is at once independent and secure, so that the projects of the legislature are put into execution, although its immediate attention may be directed to other objects....

## Tyranny of the Majority

...I hold it to be an impious and an execrable maxim, that, politically speaking, a people has a right to do whatsoever it pleases; and yet I have asserted that all authority originates in the will of the majority. Am I then, in contradiction with myself?

A general law—which bears the name of Justice—has been made and sanctioned, not only by a majority of this or that people, but by a majority of mankind. The rights of every people are consequently confined within the limits of what is just. A nation may be considered in the light of a jury which is empowered to represent society at large, and to apply the great and general law of

Justice. Ought such a jury, which represents society, to have more power than the society in which the laws it applies originate?

When I refuse to obey an unjust law, I do not contest the right which the majority has of commanding but I simply appeal from the sovereignty of the people to the sovereignty of mankind. It has been asserted that a people can never entirely outstep the boundaries of justice and of reason in those affairs which are more peculiarly its own; and that consequently full power may fearlessly be given to the majority by which it is represented. But this language is that of a slave.

A majority taken collectively may be regarded as a being whose opinions, and most frequently whose interests, are opposed to those of another being, which is styled a minority. If it be admitted that a man, possessing absolute power, may misuse that power by wronging his adversaries, why should a majority not be liable to the same reproach? Men are not apt to change their characters by agglomeration; nor does their patience in the presence of obstacles increase with the consciousness of their strength. And for these reasons I can never willingly invest any number of my fellow creatures with that unlimited authority which I should refuse to any one of them.

I do not think that it is possible to combine several principles in the same government, so as at the same time to maintain freedom, and really to oppose them to one another. The form of government which is usually termed mixed has always appeared to me to be a mere chimera. Accurately speaking there is no such thing as a mixed government, (with the meaning usually given to that word), because in all communities some one principle of action may be discovered, which preponderates over the others. England in the last century, which has been more especially cited as an example of this form of government, was in point of fact an essentially aristocratic state, although it comprised very powerful elements of democracy: for the laws and customs of the country were such, that the aristocracy could not but preponderate in the end, and subject the direction of public affairs to its own will. The error arose from too much attention being paid to the actual struggle which was going on between the nobles and the people, without considering the probable issue of the contest, which was in reality the important point. When a community really has a mixed government, that is to say, when it is equally divided between two adverse principles, it must either pass through a revolution, or fall into complete dissolution.

I am therefore of opinion that some one social power must always be made to predominate over the others; but I think that liberty is endangered when this power



is checked by no obstacles which may retard its course, and force it to moderate its own vehemence.

Unlimited power is in itself a bad and dangerous thing; human beings are not competent to exercise it with discretion; and God alone can be omnipotent, because his wisdom and his justice are always equal to his power. But no power upon earth is so worthy of honour for itself, or of reverential obedience to the rights which it represents, that I would consent to admit its uncontrolled and all-predominant authority. When I see that the right and the means of absolute command are conferred on a people or upon a king, upon an aristocracy or a democracy, a monarchy or a republic, I recognise the germ of tyranny, and I journey onwards to a land of more hopeful institutions.

In my opinion the main evil of the present democratic institutions of the United States does not arise, as is often asserted in Europe, from their weakness, but from their overpowering strength; and I am not so much alarmed at the excessive liberty which reigns in that country, as at the very inadequate securities which exist against tyranny.

When an individual or a party is wronged in the United States, to whom can he apply for redress? If to public opinion, public opinion constitutes the majority; if to the legislature, it represents the majority, and implicitly obeys its injunctions; if to the executive power, it is appointed by the majority and remains a passive tool in its hands; the public troops consist of the majority under arms; the jury is the majority invested with the right of hearing judicial cases; and in certain States even the judges are elected by the majority. However iniquitous or absurd the evil of which you complain may be, you must submit to it as well as you can.<sup>1</sup>

If, on the other hand, a legislative power could be so constituted as to represent the majority without neces-

sarily being the slave of its passions; an executive so as to retain a certain degree of uncontrolled authority; and a judiciary, so as to remain independent of the two other powers; a government would be formed which would still be democratic, without incurring any risk of tyrannical abuse.

I do not say that tyrannical abuses frequently occur in America at the present day; but I maintain that no sure barrier is established against them, and that the causes which mitigate the government are to be found in the circumstances and the manners of the country more than in its laws....

It is in the examination of the display of public opinion in the United States, that we clearly perceive how far the power of the majority surpasses all the powers with which we are acquainted in Europe. Intellectual principles exercise an influence which is so invisible and often so inappreciable, that they baffle the toils of oppression. At the present time the most absolute monarchs in Europe are unable to prevent certain notions, which are opposed to their authority, from circulating in secret throughout their dominions, and even in their courts. Such is not the case in America; as long as the majority is still undecided, discussion is carried on; but as soon as its decision is irrevocably pronounced, a submissive silence is observed; and the friends, as well as the opponents, of the measure, unite in assenting to its propriety. The reason of this is perfectly clear: no monarch is so absolute as to combine all the powers of society in his own hands, and to conquer all opposition, with the energy of a majority, which is invested with the right of making and of executing the laws.

The authority of a king is purely physical, and it controls the actions of the subject without subduing his private will; but the majority possesses a power which is physical and moral at the same time; it acts upon the will as well as upon the actions of men, and it represses not only all contest, but all controversy.

I know no country in which there is so little true independence of mind and freedom of discussion as in America. In any constitutional state in Europe every sort of religious and political theory may be advocated and propagated abroad; for there is no country in Europe so subdued by any single authority, as not to contain citizens who are ready to protect the man who raises his voice in the cause of truth from the consequences of his hardihood. If he is unfortunate enough to live under an absolute government, the people is upon his side; and if he inhabits a free country, he may find a shelter behind the authority of the throne, if he require one. The aristocratic part of society supports him in some countries, and a democracy in others. But in a nation where democratic institutions exist, orga-

<sup>1</sup> [Tocqueville's footnote:] A striking instance of the excesses which may be occasioned by the despotism of the majority occurred at Baltimore in the year 1812. At that time the war was very popular in Baltimore. A journal which had taken the other side of the question excited the indignation of the inhabitants by its opposition. The populace assembled, broke the printing-presses, and attacked the houses of the newspaper-editors. The militia was called out, but no one obeyed the call; and the only means of saving the poor wretches who were threatened by the frenzy of the mob, was to throw them into prison as common malefactors. But even this precaution was ineffectual; the mob collected again during the night, the magistrates again made a vain attempt to call out the militia; the prison was forced, one of the newspaper-editors was killed upon the spot, and the others were left for dead: the guilty parties were acquitted by the jury when they were brought to trial.



nized like those of the United States, there is but one sole authority, one single element of strength and of success, with nothing beyond it.

In America, the majority raises very formidable barriers to the liberty of opinion: within these barriers an author may write whatever he pleases, but he will repent it if he ever step beyond them. Not that he is exposed to the terrors of an *auto-da-fé*, but he is tormented by the slights and persecutions of daily obloquy. His political career is closed for ever, since he has offended the only authority which is able to promote his success. Every sort of compensation, even that of celebrity, is refused to him. Before he published his opinions, he imagined that he held them in common with many others; but no sooner has he declared them openly, than he is loudly censured by his overbearing opponents, whilst those who think, without having the courage to speak, like him, abandon him in silence. He yields at length, oppressed by the daily efforts he has been making, and he subsides into silence, as if he was tormented by remorse for having spoken the truth.

Fetters and headsmen were the coarse instruments which tyranny formerly employed; but the civilization of our age has refined the arts of despotism, which seemed however to have been sufficiently perfected before. The excesses of monarchical power had devised a variety of physical means of oppression; the democratic republics of the present day have rendered it as entirely an affair of the mind as that will which it is intended to coerce. Under the absolute sway of an individual despot, the body was attacked in order to subdue the soul; and the soul escaped the blows which were directed against it, and rose superior to the attempt; but such is not the course adopted by tyranny in democratic republics; there the body is left free, and the soul is enslaved. The sovereign can no longer say, 'You shall think as I do on pain of death;' but he says, 'You are free to think differently from me, and to retain your life, your property, and all that you possess; but if such be your determination, you are henceforth an alien among your people. You may retain your civil rights, but they will be useless to you, for you will never be chosen by your fellow citizens if you solicit their suffrages; and they will affect to scorn you if you solicit their esteem. You will remain among men, but you will be deprived of the rights of mankind. Your fellow creatures will shun you like an impure being; and those who are most persuaded of Your innocence will abandon you too, lest they should be shunned in their turn. Go in peace! I have given you your life, but it is an existence incomparably worse than death.'

Absolute monarchies have thrown an odium upon despotism; let us beware lest democratic republics should restore oppression, and should render it less

odious and less degrading in the eyes of the many, by making it still more onerous to the few.

Works have been published in the proudest nations of the Old World, expressly intended to censure the vices and deride the follies of the times: Labruyere inhabited the palace of Louis XIV when he composed his chapter upon the Great, and Moliere criticized the courtiers in the very pieces which were acted before the Court. But the ruling power in the United States is not to be made game of; the smallest reproach irritates its sensibility, and the slightest joke which has any foundation in truth renders it indignant; from the style of its language to the more solid virtues of its character, everything must be made the subject of encomium. No writer, whatever be his eminence, can escape from this tribute of adulation to his fellow citizens. The majority lives in the perpetual practice of self applause; and there are certain truths which the Americans can only learn from strangers or from experience.

If great writers have not at present existed in America, the reason is very simply given in these facts; there can be no literary genius without freedom of opinion, and freedom of opinion does not exist in America. The Inquisition has never been able to prevent a vast number of anti-religious books from circulating in Spain. The empire of the majority succeeds much better in the United States, since it actually removes the wish of publishing them. Unbelievers are to be met with in America, but, to say the truth, there is no public organ of infidelity. Attempts have been made by some governments to protect the morality of nations by prohibiting licentious books. In the United States no one is punished for this sort of works, but no one is induced to write them; not because all the citizens are immaculate in their manners, but because the majority of the community is decent and orderly.

In these cases the advantages derived from the exercise of this power are unquestionable; and I am simply discussing the nature of the power itself. This irresistible authority is a constant fact, and its judicious exercise is an accidental occurrence....

## Causes Which Mitigate the Tyranny of the Majority in the United States

... I have already pointed out the distinction which is to be made between a centralized government and a centralized administration. The former exists in America but the latter is nearly unknown there. If the directing power of the American communities had both these instruments of government at its disposal, and united the habit of executing its own commands, to the right of commanding; if, after having established the general

principles of governments it descended to the details of public business; and if, having regulated the great interests of the country, it could penetrate into the privacy of individual interests, freedom would soon be banished from the New World.

But in the United States the majority, Which so frequently displays the tastes and the propensities of a despot, is still destitute of the more perfect instruments of tyranny.

In the American republics the activity of the central government has never as yet been extended beyond a limited number of objects sufficiently prominent to call forth its attention. The secondary affairs of society have never been regulated by its authority; and nothing has hitherto betrayed its desire of interfering in them. The majority is become more and more absolute, but it has not increased the prerogatives of the central government; those great prerogatives have been confined to a certain sphere; and although the despotism of the majority may be galling upon one point, it cannot be said to extend to all. However the predominant party in the nation may be carried away by its passions; however ardent it may be in the pursuit of its projects, it cannot oblige all the citizens to comply with its desires in the same manner, and at the same time throughout the country. When the central Government which represents that majority has issued a decree it must entrust the execution of its will to agents, over whom it frequently has no control, and whom it cannot perpetually direct. The townships, municipal bodies, and counties may therefore be looked upon as concealed breakwaters, which check or part the tide of popular excitement. If an oppressive law were passed, the liberties of the people would still be protected by the means by which that law would be put in execution: the majority cannot descend to the details, and (as I will venture to style them) the puerilities of administrative tyranny. Nor does the people entertain that full consciousness of its authority which would prompt it to interfere in these matters; it knows the extent of its natural powers, but it is unacquainted with the increased resources which the art of government might furnish.

This point deserves attention; for if a democratic republic, similar to that of the United States, were ever founded in a country where the power of a single individual had previously subsisted, and the effects of a centralized administration had sunk deep into the habits and the Laws of the people, I do not hesitate to assert that in that country a more insufferable despotism would prevail than any which now exists in the absolute monarchies of Europe; or indeed than any which could be found on this side the confines of Asia....

In visiting the Americans and in studying their laws, we perceive that the authority they have entrusted to

members of the legal profession, and the influence which these individuals exercise in the Government, is the most powerful existing security against the excesses of democracy.

This effect seems to me to result from a general cause which it is useful to investigate, since it may produce analogous consequences elsewhere....

The special information which lawyers derive from their studies, ensures them a separate station in society; and they constitute a sort of privileged body in the scale of intelligence. This notion of their superiority perpetually recurs to them in the practice of their profession: they are the masters of a science which is necessary, but which is not very generally known: they serve as arbiters between the citizens; and the habit of directing the blind passions of parties in litigation to their purpose inspires them with a certain contempt for the judgement of the multitude. To this it may be added, that they naturally constitute a body; not by any previous understanding, or by an agreement Which directs them to a common end; but the analogy of their studies and the uniformity of their proceedings connect their minds together, as much as a common interest could combine their endeavours.

A portion of the tastes and of the habits of the aristocracy may consequently be discovered in the characters of men in the profession of the law. They participate in the same instinctive love of order and of formalities; and they entertain the same repugnance to the actions of the multitude, and the same secret contempt of the government of the people. I do not mean to say that the natural propensities of lawyers are sufficiently strong to sway them irresistibly; for they, like most other men, are governed by their private interests and the advantages of the moment....

I do not, then, assert that all the members of the legal profession are at all times the friends of order, and the opponents of innovation, but merely that most of them usually are so. In a community in which lawyers are allowed to occupy, without opposition, that high station which naturally belongs to them, their general spirit will be eminently conservative and anti-democratic. When an aristocracy excludes the leaders of that profession from its ranks, it excites enemies which are the more formidable to its security as they are independent of the nobility by their industrious pursuits; and they feel themselves to be its equal in point of intelligence, although they enjoy less opulence and less power. But whenever an aristocracy consents to impart some of its privileges to these same individuals, the two classes coalesce very readily, and assume, as it were, the consistency of a single order of family interests.

I am, in like manner, inclined to believe, that a monarch will always be able to convert legal practition-



ers into the most serviceable instruments of his authority. There is a far greater affinity between this class of individuals and the executive power, than there is between them and the people; just as there is a greater natural affinity between the nobles and the monarch, than between the nobles and the people, although the higher orders of society have occasionally resisted the prerogative of the Crown in concert with the lower classes.

Lawyers are attached to public order beyond every other consideration, and the best security of public order is authority. It must not be forgotten, that if they prize the free institutions of their country much, they nevertheless value the legality of those institutions far more: they are less afraid of tyranny than of arbitrary power; and provided that the legislature take upon itself to deprive men of their independence, they are not dissatisfied....

The government of democracy is favourable to the political power of lawyers; for when the wealthy, the noble, and the prince are excluded from the government, they are sure to occupy the highest stations in their own right, as it were, since they are the only men of information and sagacity, beyond the sphere of the people, who can be the object of the popular choice. If, then, they are led by their tastes to combine with the aristocracy and to support the Crown, they are naturally brought into contact with the people by their interests. They like the government of democracy, without participating in its propensities and without imitating its weaknesses; whence they derive a twofold authority, from it and over it. The people in democratic states does not mistrust the members of the legal profession, because it is well known that they are interested in serving the popular cause; and it listens to them without irritation, because it does not attribute to them any sinister designs. The object of lawyers is not, indeed, to overthrow the institutions of democracy, but they constantly endeavor to give it an impulse which diverts it from its real tendency, by means which are foreign to its nature. Lawyers belong to the people by birth and interest, to the aristocracy by habit and by taste, and they may be looked upon as the natural bond and connecting link of the two great classes of society.

The profession of the law is the only aristocratic element which can be amalgamated without violence with the natural elements of democracy, and which can be advantageously and permanently combined with them. I am not unacquainted with the defects which are inherent in the character of that body of men; but without this admixture of lawyer-like sobriety with the democratic principle, I question whether democratic institutions could long be maintained; and I cannot believe

that a republic could subsist at the present time, if the influence of lawyers in public business did not increase in proportion to the power of the people.

This aristocratic character, which I hold to be common to the legal profession, is much more distinctly marked in the United States and in England than in any other country. This proceeds not only from the legal studies of the English and American lawyers, but from the nature of the legislation, and the position which those persons occupy, in the two countries. The English and the Americans have retained the law of precedents: that is to say, they continue to found their legal opinions and the decisions of their courts upon the opinions and the decisions of their forefathers. In the mind of an English or American lawyer, a taste and a reverence for what is old is almost always united to a love of regular and lawful proceedings.

The French Codes are often difficult of comprehension, but they can be read by every one; nothing, on the other hand, can be more impenetrable to the uninitiated than a legislation founded upon precedents. The indispensable want of legal assistance which is felt in England and in the United States, and the high opinion which is generally entertained of the ability of the legal profession, tend to separate it more and more from the people, and to place it in a distinct class. The French lawyer is simply a man extensively acquainted with the statutes of his country; but the English or American lawyer resembles the hierophants of Egypt, for, like them, he is the sole interpreter of an occult science....

In America there are no nobles or literary men, and the people is apt to mistrust the wealthy; lawyers consequently form the highest political class, and the most cultivated circle of society. They have therefore nothing to gain by innovation, which adds a conservative interest to their natural taste for public order. If I were asked Where I place the American aristocracy, I should reply without hesitation, that it is not composed of the rich, who are united together by no common tie, but that it occupies the judicial bench and the bar.

The more we reflect upon all that occurs in the United States, the more shall we be persuaded that the lawyers as a body, form the most powerful, if not the only counterpoise to the democratic element. In that country we perceive how eminently the legal profession is qualified by its powers, and even by its defects, to neutralize the vices which are inherent in popular government. When the American people is intoxicated by passion, or carried away by the impetuosity of its ideas, it is checked and stopped by the almost invisible influence of its legal counsellors, who secretly oppose their aristocratic propensities to its democratic instincts, their



superstitious attachment to what is antique to its love of novelty, their narrow views to its immense designs, and their habitual procrastination to its ardent impatience.

The courts of justice are the most visible organs by which the legal profession is enabled to control the democracy. The judge is a lawyer, who, independently of the taste for regularity and order which he has contracted in the study of legislation, derives an additional love of stability from his own inalienable functions. His legal attainments have already raised him to a distinguished rank amongst his fellow-citizens; his political power completes the distinction of his station, and gives him the inclinations natural to privileged classes.

Armed with the power of declaring the laws to be unconstitutional, the American magistrate perpetually interferes in political affairs. He cannot force the people to make laws, but at least he can oblige it not to disobey its own enactments, or to act inconsistently with its own principles. I am aware that a secret tendency to diminish the judicial power exists in the United States; and by most of the Constitutions of the several States, the Government can, upon the demand of the two Houses of the legislature, remove the judges from their stations. By some other constitutions the members of the tribunals are elected, and they are even subjected to frequent re-elections. I venture to predict that these innovations will sooner or later be attended with fatal consequences; and that it will be found out at some future period, that the attack which is made upon the judicial power has affected the democratic republic itself....

The influence of the legal habits which are common in America extends beyond the limits I have just pointed out. Scarcely any question arises in the United States which does not become, sooner or later, a subject of judicial debate; hence all parties are obliged to borrow the ideas, and even the language usual in judicial proceedings, in their daily controversies. As most public men are, or have been legal practitioners, they introduce the customs and technicalities of their profession into the affairs of the country. The jury extends this habitude to all classes. The language of the law thus becomes, in some measure, a vulgar tongue; the spirit of the law, which is produced in the schools and courts of justice, gradually penetrates beyond their walls into the bosom of society, where it descends to the lowest classes, so that the whole people contracts the habits and the tastes of the magistrate.

The lawyers of the United States form a party which is but little feared and scarcely perceived, which has no badge peculiar to itself, which adapts itself with great flexibility to the exigencies of the time, and accommo-

dates itself to all the movements of the social body: but this party extends over the whole community, and it penetrates into all classes of society; it acts upon the country imperceptibly, but it finally fashions it to suit its purposes....

### **Principal Causes Which Tend to Maintain the Democratic Republic in the United States**

A thousand circumstances, independent of the will of man, concur to facilitate the maintenance of a democratic republic in the United States. Some of these peculiarities are known, the others may easily be pointed out; but I shall confine myself to the most prominent amongst them.

The Americans have no neighbours, and consequently they have no great wars, or financial crisis, or invasions, or conquest to dread; they require neither great taxes, nor great armies, nor great generals; and they have nothing to fear from a scourge, which is more formidable to republics than all these evils combined, namely, military glory. It is impossible to deny the inconceivable influence which military glory exercises upon the spirit of a nation. General Jackson, whom the Americans have twice elected to be the head of their Government, is a man of a violent temper and mediocre talents; no one circumstance in the whole course of his career ever proved that he is qualified to govern a free people; and indeed the majority of the enlightened classes of the Union has always been opposed to him. But he was raised to the Presidency, and has been maintained in that lofty station, solely by the recollection of a victory which he gained, twenty years ago, under the walls of New Orleans; a victory which was, however, a very ordinary achievement, and which could only be remembered in a country where battles are rare. Now the people which is thus carried away by the illusions of glory, is unquestionably the most cold and calculating, the most unmilitary (if I may use the expression), and the most prosaic of all the peoples of the earth.

The chief circumstance which has favoured the establishment and the maintenance of a democratic republic in the United States, is the nature of the territory which the Americans inhabit. Their ancestors gave them the love of equality and of freedom; but God himself gave them the means of remaining equal and free, by placing them upon a boundless continent, which is open to their exertions. General prosperity is favourable to the stability of all governments, but more particularly of a democratic constitution, which depends upon the

dispositions of the majority, and more particularly of that portion of the community which is most exposed to feel the pressure of want. When the people rules it must be rendered happy, or it will overturn the state and misery is apt to stimulate it to those excesses to which ambition rouses kings. The physical causes, independent of the laws, which contribute to promote general prosperity, are more numerous in America than they have ever been in any other country in the world at any other period of history. In the United States not only is legislation democratic, but Nature herself favours the cause of the people.

In what part of human tradition can be found anything at all similar to that which is occurring under our eyes in North America? The celebrated communities of antiquity were all founded in the midst of hostile nations, which they were obliged to subjugate, before they could flourish in their place. Even the moderns have found, in some parts of South America, vast regions inhabited by a people of inferior civilization, but which occupied and cultivated the soil. To found their new States, it was necessary to extirpate or to subdue a numerous population, until civilization has been made to blush for their success. But North America was only inhabited by wandering tribes, who took no thought of the natural riches of the soil; and that vast country was still, properly speaking, an empty continent, a desert land awaiting its inhabitants.

Everything is extraordinary in America, the social Condition of the inhabitants, as well as the laws; but the soil upon which these institutions are founded is more extraordinary than all the rest. When man was first placed upon the earth by the Creator, that earth was inexhaustible in its youth; but man was weak and ignorant: and when he had learned to explore the treasures which it contained, hosts of his fellow-creatures covered its surface, and he was obliged to earn an asylum for repose and for freedom by the sword. At that same period North America was discovered, as if it had been kept in reserve by the Deity, and had just risen from beneath the waters of the deluge....

An erroneous notion is generally entertained, that the deserts of America are peopled by European emigrants, who annually disembark upon the coasts of the New World, whilst the American population increases and multiplies upon the soil which its forefathers tilled. The European settler, however, usually arrives in the United States without friends, and sometimes without resources; in order to subsist, he is obliged to work for hire, and he rarely proceeds beyond that belt of industrious population which adjoins the ocean. The desert cannot be explored without capital or credit; and the body must be accustomed to the rigours of a new climate, before it can be exposed to the chances of forest

life. It is the Americans themselves who daily quit the spots which gave them birth, to acquire extensive domains in a remote country. Thus the European leaves his cottage for the transatlantic shores; and the American, who is born on that very coast, plunges in his turn into the wilds of Central America. This double emigration is incessant; it begins in the remotest parts of Europe, it crosses the Atlantic Ocean, and it advances over the solitudes of the New World. Millions of men are marching at once towards the same horizon; their language, their religion, their manners differ, their object is the same. The gifts of fortune are promised in the West, and to the West they bend their course.

No event can be compared with this continuous removal of the human race, except perhaps those irruptions which preceded the fall of the Roman Empire. Then, as well as now, generations of men were impelled forwards in the same direction to meet and struggle on the same spot; but the designs of Providence were not the same; then, every new comer was the harbinger of destruction and of death; now, every adventurer brings with him the elements of prosperity and of life. The future still conceals from us the ulterior consequences of this emigration of the Americans towards the West; but we can readily apprehend its more immediate results. As a portion of the inhabitants annually leave the States in which they were born, the population of these States increases very slowly, although they have long been established: thus in Connecticut, which only contains 59 inhabitants to the square mile, the population has not been increased by more than one quarter in forty years, whilst that of England has been augmented by one third in the lapse of the same period. The European emigrant always lands, therefore, in a country which is but half full, and where hands are in request: he becomes a workman in easy circumstances; his son goes to seek his fortune in unpeopled regions, and he becomes a rich landowner. The former amasses the capital which the latter invests, and the stranger as well as the native is unacquainted with want....

A single fact will suffice to show the prodigious number of individuals who leave New England, in this manner, to settle themselves in the wilds. We were assured in 1830, that thirty-six of the members of Congress were born in the little state of Connecticut. The population of Connecticut, which constitutes only one forty-third part of that of the United States, thus furnished one-eighth of the whole body of representatives. The State of Connecticut, however, only sends five delegates to Congress; and the thirty-one others sit for the new Western States. If these thirty-one individuals had remained in Connecticut, it is probable that instead of becoming rich landowners they would have remained humble labourers; that they would have lived



in obscurity without being able to rise into public life, and that, far from becoming useful members of the legislature, they might have been unruly citizens....

It is difficult to describe the rapacity with which the American rushes forward to secure the immense booty which fortune proffers to him. In the pursuit, he fearlessly braves the arrow of the Indian and the distempers of the forest; he is unimpressed by the silence of the woods; the approach of beasts of prey does not disturb him; for he is goaded onwards by a passion more intense than the love of life. Before him lies a boundless continent, and he urges onwards as if time pressed, and he was afraid of finding no room for his exertions. I have spoken of the emigration from the older States, but how shall I describe that which takes place from the more recent ones? Fifty years have scarcely elapsed since that of Ohio was founded; the greater part of its inhabitants were not born within its confines; its capital has only been built thirty years, and its territory is still covered by an immense extent of uncultivated fields; nevertheless, the population of Ohio is already proceeding westwards and most of the settlers who descend to the fertile savannahs of Illinois are citizens of Ohio. These men left their first country to improve their condition; they quit their resting-place to ameliorate it still more; fortune awaits them everywhere, but happiness they cannot attain. The desire of prosperity is become an ardent and restless passion in their minds which grows by what it gains. They early broke the ties which bound them to their natal earth, and they have contracted no fresh ones on their way. Emigration was at first necessary to them as a means of subsistence; and it soon becomes a sort of game of chance, which they pursue for the emotions it excites, as much for the gain it procures....

In France, simple tastes, orderly manners, domestic affections, and the attachment which men feel to the place of their birth, are looked upon as great guarantees of the tranquillity and happiness of the State. But in America nothing seems to be more prejudicial to society than these virtues. The French Canadians, who have faithfully preserved the traditions of their pristine manners, are already embarrassed for room upon their small territory; and this little community, which has so recently begun to exist, will shortly be a prey to the calamities incident to old nations. In Canada, the most enlightened, patriotic, and humane inhabitants make extraordinary efforts to render the people dissatisfied with those simple enjoyments which still content it. There, the seductions of wealth are vaunted with as much zeal as the charms of an honest but limited income in the Old World; and more exertions are made to excite the passions of the citizens there than to calm them elsewhere. If we listen to their eulogies, we shall

hear that nothing is more praiseworthy than to exchange the pure and homely pleasures which even the poor man tastes in his own country, for the dull delights of prosperity under a foreign sky; to leave the patrimonial hearth, and the turf beneath which his forefathers sleep; in short, to abandon the living and the dead in quest of fortune.

At the present time America presents a field for human effort, far more extensive than any sum of labour which can be applied to work it. In America, too much knowledge cannot be diffused; for all knowledge, whilst it may serve him who possesses it, turns also to the advantage of those who are without it. New wants are not to be feared, since they can be satisfied without difficulty; the growth of human passions need not be dreaded, since all passions may find an easy and a legitimate object; nor can men be put in possession of too much freedom, since they are scarcely ever tempted to misuse their liberties.

The American republics of the present day are like companies of adventurers, formed to explore in common the waste lands of the New world, and busied in a flourishing trade. The passions which agitate the Americans most deeply are not their political, but their commercial passions; or, to speak more correctly, they introduce the habits they contract in business into their political life. They love order, without which affairs do not prosper; and they set an especial value upon a regular conduct, which is the foundation of a solid business: they prefer the good sense which amasses large fortunes, to that enterprising spirit which frequently dissipates them; general ideas alarm their minds, which are accustomed to positive calculations; and they hold practice in more honour than theory.

It is in America that one learns to understand the influence which physical prosperity exercises over political actions, and even over opinions which ought to acknowledge no sway but that of reason; and it is more especially amongst strangers that this truth is perceptible. Most of the European emigrants to the New World carry with them that wild love of independence and of change which our calamities are so apt to engender. I sometimes met with Europeans, in the United States, who had been obliged to leave their own country on account of their political opinions. They all astonished me by the language they held; but one of them surprised me more than all the rest. As I was crossing one of the most remote districts of Pennsylvania, I was benighted, and obliged to beg for hospitality at the gate of a wealthy planter, who was a Frenchman by birth. He bade me sit down beside his fire, and we began to talk with that freedom which befits persons who meet in the back woods, two thousand leagues from their native country. I was aware that my host had been a great lev-



eller and an ardent demagogue forty years ago, and that his name was not unknown to fame. I was therefore not a little surprised to hear him discuss the rights of property as an economist or a landowner might have done: he spoke of the necessary gradations which fortune establishes among men, of obedience to established laws, of the influence of good morals in commonwealths, and of the support which religious opinions give to order and to freedom; he even went so far as to quote an evangelical authority in corroboration of one of his political tenets.

I listened, and marvelled at the feebleness of human reason. A proposition is true or false, but no art can prove it to be one or the other, in the midst of the uncertainties of science and the conflicting lessons of ex-

perience, until a new incident disperses the clouds of doubt; I was poor, I become rich; and I am not to expect that prosperity will act upon my conduct, and leave my judgement free: my opinions change with my fortune, and the happy circumstances which I turn to my advantage, furnish me with that decisive argument which was before wanting.

The influence of prosperity acts still more freely upon the American than upon strangers. The American has always seen the connexion of public order and public prosperity, intimately united as they are, go on before his eyes; he does not conceive that one can subsist without the other; he has therefore nothing to forget; nor has he, like so many Europeans, to unlearn the lessons of his early education....

## 4

# Useful Knowledge (1836)

DANIEL WEBSTER

In his lecture before the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in Boston, Daniel Webster summarized the Whig view of economic and social progress. Unlike their Democratic opponents, Whigs viewed the machine, factory, and corporation in the most positive light. Webster also denied that there was any competition between the workers and management, insisting that everyone shared the same goals and would benefit from modern technology.

### Questions to Consider

- Did the factory system minimize disparities of wealth, as Webster maintains?
- Is the machine truly the servant of the worker?

...Now it has been the purpose, and a purpose most successfully and triumphantly obtained, of scientific art, to increase this active agency, which, in a philosophical point of view, is, I think, to be regarded as labor, by bringing the powers of the elements into active and more efficient operation, and creating millions

of automatic laborers, all diligently employed for the benefit of man. The powers are principally steam, and the weight of water.... They are made to be active agents, to have motion, and effect, and though without intelligence, they are guided by those laws of science which are exact and perfect, and they produce results, therefore, in general, more exact and accurate than the human hand is capable of producing....

It is thus that the successful application of science to art increases the productive power and agency of the

Source: *The Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster* (Boston, 1903), 13: pp. 67–76.

human race. It multiplies laborers without multiplying consumers, and the world is precisely as much benefited as if Providence had provided for our use millions of men, like ourselves in external appearance, who would work and labor and toil, and who yet required for their own subsistence neither shelter, nor food, nor clothing....

Perhaps the most prominent instance of the application of science to art, in the production of things necessary to man's subsistence, is the use of the elastic power of steam, applied to the operations of spinning and weaving and dressing fabrics for human wear. All this mighty discovery bears directly on the means of human subsistence and human comfort. It has greatly altered commerce, agriculture, and even the habits of life among nations. It has affected commerce by creating new objects, or vastly increasing the importance of those before hardly known; it has affected agriculture by giving new value to its products;—what would now be the comparative value of the soil of our Southern and Southwestern States if the spinning of cotton by machinery, the power loom, and the cotton gin, were struck out of existence? And it has affected habits by giving a new direction to labor and creating a multitude of new pursuits....

If these, and other considerations may suffice to satisfy us that the application of science to art is the main cause of the sudden augmentation of wealth and comfort in modern times, a truth remains to be stated of the greatest magnitude, and the highest practical importance, and that is, that this augmentation of wealth and comfort is general and diffusive, reaching to all classes, embracing all interests and benefiting, not a part of society, but the whole. There is no monopoly in science. There are no exclusive privileges in the workings of automatic machinery, or the powers of natural bodies. The poorest, as well as the richest man in society, has a direct interest, and generally the poor a far greater interest than the rich, in the successful operation of these arts, which make the means of living, clothing especially, abundant and cheap. The advantages conferred by knowledge in increasing our physical resources, from their very nature, cannot be enjoyed by a few only. They are all open to the many, and to be profitable, the many must enjoy it.

The products of science applied to art in mechanical inventions, are made, not to be hoarded, but to be sold. Their successful operation requires a large market. It requires that the great mass of society should be able to buy and to consume. The improved condition of all classes, more ability to buy food and raiment, better modes of living, and increased comforts of every kind, are exactly what is necessary and indispensable in order that capital invested in automatic operations should be productive to the owners. Some establishments of this

kind necessarily require large capital, such as the woollen and cotton factories. And in a country like ours, in which the spirit of our institutions, and all our laws, tend so much to the distribution and equalization of property, there are few individuals of sufficient wealth to build and carry on an establishment by their own means. This renders a union of capitals necessary, and this among us is conveniently effected by corporations which are but partnerships regulated by law....

It would seem that nothing could be plainer than that whatever reduces the price, whether of food or of clothing, must be in the end beneficial to the laboring classes. Yet it has not unfrequently happened, that machinery has been broken and destroyed in England, by workmen, by open and lawless violence. Most persons in our country see the folly as well as the injustice and barbarism of such proceedings; but the ideas in which these violences originated are no more unfounded and scarcely more disreputable, than those which would represent capital, collected, necessarily, in large sums, in order to carry on useful processes in which science is applied to art, in the production of articles useful to all, as being hostile to the common good, or having an interest separate from that of the majority of the community. All such representations, if not springing from sinister design, must be the result of great ignorance, or great prejudice. It has been found by long experience in England, that large capitalists can produce cheaper than small ones, especially in the article of cotton. Greater savings can be made and these savings enable the proprietor to go on, when he must otherwise stop. There is no doubt that it is to her abundant capital, England is now indebted for whatever power of competition with the United States she now sustains, in producing cheap articles.

...The unquestionable operation of all these things has been not only to increase property, but to equalize it, to diffuse it, to scatter its advantages among the many, and to give content[ment], cheerfulness, and animation to all classes of the social system. In New England, more particularly, has this been the result. What has enabled us to be rich and prosperous, notwithstanding, the barrenness of our soil and the rigor of our climate? What has diffused so much comfort, wealth, and happiness among all classes, but the diligent employment of our citizens, in these processes and mechanical operations in which science comes in aid of handicraft? Abolish the use of steam and the application of water power to machinery, and what would at this moment be the condition of New England? And yet steam and water power have been employed only, and can be employed only, by what is called aggregated wealth. Far distant be the day then, when the people of New England shall be deceived by the specious fallacy, that there are different and opposing interests in our

community; that what is useful to one, is hurtful to the rest; that there is one interest for the rich, and another

interest for the poor; that capital is the enemy of labor, or labor the foe of capital.

## 5

## On the Reception of Abolition Petitions (1837)

J O H N C . C A L H O U N

On February 6, 1837, the Senate's most prominent defender of slavery, South Carolina's John C. Calhoun, rose to demand that the United States Senate not even permit the presentation of petitions opposing the institution of slavery. Calhoun dismisses criticisms of slavery as harmful and wrong, for slavery is "a positive good," and insists that the South is the victim of federal action. The agitation of Southern senators and representatives would lead to the notorious Gag Bill, forbidding the discussion of such issues and the consideration of abolitionist petitions. Opposition to this act was led by former President John Q. Adams.

### Questions to Consider

- On what grounds could Adams attack the Gag Law as a denial of the most fundamental constitutional rights?
- What justification for such legislation does Calhoun offer?
- How might he have responded to those who raised the specter of the first amendment?

**I**F the time of the Senate permitted, I would feel it to be my duty to call for the reading of the mass of petitions on the table, in order that we might know what language they hold towards the slaveholding States and their institutions; but as it will not, I have selected, indiscriminately from the pile, two; one from those in manuscript, and the other from the printed, and without knowing their contents will call for the reading of them, so that we may judge, by them, of the character of the whole. [Here the Secretary read the two petitions.]

Source: Richard K. Crallé, ed., *Speeches of John C. Calhoun, Delivered in the House of Representatives, and in the Senate of the United States* (New York, 1883), pp. 625–633.

Such...is the language held towards us and ours. The peculiar institution of the South—that, on the maintenance of which the very existence of the slaveholding States depends, is pronounced to be sinful and odious, in the sight of God and man; and this with a systematic design of rendering us hateful in the eyes of the world—with a view to a general crusade against us and our institutions. This, too, in the legislative halls of the Union; created by these confederated States, for the better protection of their peace, their safety, and their respective institutions;—and yet, we, the representatives of twelve of these sovereign States against whom this deadly war is waged, are expected to sit here in silence, hearing ourselves and our constituents day after day denounced, without uttering a word; for if we but open our lips, the charge of agitation is resounded on all



sides, and we are held up as seeking to aggravate the evil which we resist. Every reflecting mind must see in all this a state of things deeply and dangerously diseased.

I do not belong...to the school which holds that aggression is to be met by concession. Mine is the opposite creed, which teaches that encroachments must be met at the beginning, and that those who act on the opposite principle are prepared to become slaves. In this case, in particular, I hold concession or compromise to be fatal. If we concede an inch, concession would follow concession—compromise would follow compromise, until our ranks would be so broken that effectual resistance would be impossible. We must meet the enemy on the frontier, with a fixed determination of maintaining our position at every hazard. Consent to receive these insulting petitions, and the next demand will be that they be referred to a committee in order that they may be deliberated and acted upon.... If we yield, that will be followed by another, and we will thus proceed, step by step, to the final consummation of the object of these petitions. We are now told that the most effectual mode of arresting the progress of abolition is, to reason it down; and with this view it is urged that the petitions ought to be referred to a committee. That is the very ground which was taken at the last session in the other House, but instead of arresting its progress it has since advanced more rapidly than ever. The most unquestionable right may be rendered doubtful, if once admitted to be a subject of controversy, and that would be the case in the present instance. The subject is beyond the jurisdiction of Congress—they have no right to touch it in any shape or form, or to make it the subject of deliberation or discussion.

In opposition to this view it is urged that Congress is bound by the constitution to receive petitions in every case and on every subject, whether within its constitutional competency or not. I hold the doctrine to be absurd, and do solemnly believe, that it would be as easy to prove that it has the right to abolish slavery, as that it is bound to receive petitions for that purpose....

As widely as this incendiary spirit has spread, it has not yet infected this body, or the great mass of the intelligent and business portion of the North; but unless it be speedily stopped, it will spread and work upwards till it brings the two great sections of the Union into deadly conflict. This is not a new impression with me. Several years since, in a discussion with one of the Senators from Massachusetts (Mr. Webster), before this fell spirit had showed itself, I then predicted that the doctrine of the proclamation and the Force Bill,—that this Government had a right, in the last resort, to determine the extent of its own powers, and enforce its decision at the point of the bayonet, which was so warmly maintained by that Senator, would at no distant day arouse the dormant spirit of abolitionism. I told him

that the doctrine was tantamount to the assumption of unlimited power on the part of the Government, and that such would be the impression on the public mind in a large portion of the Union. The consequence would be inevitable. A large portion of the Northern States believed slavery to be a sin, and would consider it as an obligation of conscience to abolish it if they should feel themselves in any degree responsible for its continuance,—and that this doctrine would necessarily lead to the belief of such responsibility. I then predicted that it would commence as it has with this fanatical portion of society, and that they would begin their operations on the ignorant, the weak, the young, and the thoughtless,—and gradually extend upwards till they would become strong enough to obtain political control, when he and others holding the highest stations in society, would, however reluctant, be compelled to yield to their doctrines, or be driven into obscurity. But four years have since elapsed, and all this is already in a course of regular fulfilment....

Already it has taken possession of the pulpit, of the schools, and, to a considerable extent, of the press; those great instruments by which the mind of the rising generation will be formed.

However sound the great body of the non-slaveholding States are at present, in the course of a few years they will be succeeded by those who will have been taught to hate the people and institutions of nearly one-half of this Union, with a hatred more deadly than one hostile nation ever entertained towards another. It is easy to see the end. By the necessary course of events, if left to themselves, we must become, finally, two people. It is impossible under the deadly hatred which must spring up between the two great sections, if the present causes are permitted to operate unchecked, that we should continue under the same political system. The conflicting elements would burst the Union asunder, powerful as are the links which hold it together. Abolition and the Union cannot co-exist. As the friend of the Union I openly proclaim it,—and the sooner it is known the better.... We of the South will not, cannot surrender our institutions. To maintain the existing relations between the two races, inhabiting that section of the Union, is indispensable to the peace and happiness of both. It cannot be subverted without drenching the country in blood, and extirpating one or the other of the races. Be it good or bad, it has grown up with our society and institutions, and is so interwoven with them, that to destroy it would be to destroy us as a people. But let me not be understood as admitting, even by implication, that the existing relations between the two races in the slaveholding States is an evil:—far otherwise; I hold it to be a good, as it has thus far proved itself to be to both, and will continue to prove so if not disturbed by the fell spirit of abolition. I appeal to facts. Never before has the black race of Central Africa, from the dawn

of history to the present day, attained a condition so civilized and so improved, not only physically, but morally and intellectually. It came among us in a low, degraded, and savage condition, and in the course of a few generations it has grown up under the fostering care of our institutions, reviled as they have been, to its present comparatively civilized condition. This, with the rapid increase of numbers, is conclusive proof of the general happiness of the race, in spite of all the exaggerated tales to the contrary.

In the mean time, the white or European race has not degenerated. It has kept pace with its brethren in other sections of the Union where slavery does not exist. It is odious to make comparison; but I appeal to all sides whether the South is not equal in virtue, intelligence, patriotism, courage, disinterestedness, and all the high qualities which adorn our nature. I ask whether we have not contributed our full share of talents and political wisdom in forming and sustaining this political fabric; and whether we have not constantly inclined most strongly to the side of liberty, and been the first to see and first to resist the encroachments of power. In one thing only are we inferior—the arts of gain; we acknowledge that we are less wealthy than the Northern section of this Union, but I trace this mainly to the fiscal action of this Government, which has extracted much from, and spent little among us. Had it been the reverse,—if the exaction had been from the other section, and the expenditure with us, this point of superiority would not be against us now, as it was not at the formation of this Government.

But I take higher ground. I hold that in the present state of civilization, where two races of different origin, and distinguished by color, and other physical differences, as well as intellectual, are brought together, the relation now existing in the slaveholding States between the two, is, instead of an evil, a good—a positive good. I feel myself called upon to speak freely upon the

subject where the honor and interests of those I represent are involved. I hold then, that there never has yet existed a wealthy and civilized society in which one portion of the community did not, in point of fact, live on the labor of the other. Broad and general as is this assertion, it is fully borne out by history.... I fearlessly assert that the existing relation between the two races in the South against which these blind fanatics are waging war, forms the most solid and durable foundation on which to rear free and stable political institutions. It is useless to disguise the fact. There is and always has been in an advanced stage of wealth and civilization, a conflict between labor and capital. The condition of society in the South exempts us from the disorders and dangers resulting from this conflict; and which explains why it is that the political condition of the slaveholding States has been so much more stable and quiet than that of the North. The advantages of the former, in this respect, will become more and more manifest if left undisturbed by interference from without, as the country advances in wealth and numbers.... Be assured that emancipation itself would not satisfy these fanatics:—that gained, the next step would be to raise the negroes to a social and political equality with the whites; and that being effected, we would soon find the present condition of the two races reversed. They and their northern allies would be the masters, and we the slaves; the condition of the white race in the British West India Islands, bad as it is, would be happiness to ours....

One thing alarms me—the eager pursuit of gain which overspreads the land, and which absorbs every faculty of the mind and every feeling of the heart. Of all passions avarice is the most blind and compromising—the last to see and the first to yield to danger. I dare not hope that any thing I can say will arouse the South to a due sense of danger; I fear it is beyond the power of mortal voice to awaken it in time from the fatal security into which it has fallen.

## 6

## *The Young American (1844)*

R A L P H W A L D O E M E R S O N

Ralph Waldo Emerson was a phenomenally successful lecturer. What made his success so notable was the complexity of his speeches. But apparently his style



of delivery was so eloquent yet simple that thousands of people would attend his discourses. Emerson was an intellectual nationalist. As the following lecture reveals, he resented America's continued fawning over everything British. He called on his audiences to discover the indigenous genius of their homeland, and he saw in the development of commerce in the United States the future hope of humanity.

### Questions to Consider

- Given the English roots of the United States, how can Emerson say that the country "has no past"?
- What is the role of the railroad in the creation of an authentically "American sentiment"?

**I**t is remarkable, that our people have their intellectual culture from one country, and their duties from another.... This false state of things is newly in a way to be corrected. America is beginning to assert itself to the senses and to the imagination of her children, and Europe is receding in the same degree. This their reaction on education gives a new importance to the internal improvements and to the politics of the country.

There is no American citizen who has not been stimulated to reflection by the facilities now in progress of construction for travel and the transportation of goods in the United States. The alleged effect to augment disproportionately the size of cities, is in a rapid course of fulfilment in this metropolis of New England....

This rage for road building is beneficent for America, where vast distance is so main a consideration in our domestic politics and trade, inasmuch as the great political promise of the invention is to hold the Union staunch, whose days seemed already numbered by the mere inconvenience of transporting representatives, judges, and officers across such tedious distances of land and water. Not only is distance annihilated, but when, as now, the locomotive and the steamboat, like enormous shuttles, shoot every day across the thousand various threads of national descent and employment, and bind them fast in one web, an hourly assimilation goes forward, and there is no danger that local peculiarities and hostilities should be preserved....

1. But I have abstained too long from speaking of that which led me to this topic,—[the railroad's] importance in creating an American sentiment. An unlooked for consequence of the railroad, is the increased acquaintance it has given the American people with the boundless resources of their own soil. If this invention has reduced England to a third of its size, by bringing

people so much nearer, in this country it has given a new celerity to *time*, or anticipated by fifty years the planting of tracts of land, the choice of water privileges, the working of mines, and other natural advantages. Railroad iron is a magician's rod, in its power to evoke the sleeping energies of land and water.

The railroad is but one arrow in our quiver, though it has great value as a sort of yard-stick, and surveyor's line. The bountiful continent is ours, state on state, and territory on territory, to the waves of the Pacific sea....

2. In the second place, the uprise and culmination of the new and anti-feudal power of Commerce, is the political fact of most significance to the American at this hour.

We cannot look on the freedom of this country, in connexion with its youth, without a presentiment that here shall laws and institutions exist on some scale of proportion to the majesty of nature. To men legislating for the area betwixt the two oceans, betwixt the snows and the tropics, somewhat of the gravity of nature will infuse itself into the code.... It seems so easy for America to inspire and express the most expansive and humane spirit; new-born, free, healthful, strong, the land of the laborer, of the democrat, of the philanthropist, of the believer, of the saint, she should speak for the human race. America is the country of the Future. From Washington, proverbially 'the city of magnificent distances,' through all its cities, states, and territories, it is a country of beginnings, of projects, of designs, and expectations. It has no past: all has an onward and prospective look....

That serene Power interposes the check upon the caprices and officiousness of our wills. His charity is not our charity.... It resists our meddling, eleemosynary contrivances. We devise sumptuary laws, and relief laws, but the principle of population is always reducing wages to the lowest pittance on which human life can be sustained. We legislate against forestalling and monopoly; we would have a common granary for the poor;

Source: Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Dial* 4 (April, 1844), pp. 484–507.

but the selfishness which hoards the corn for high prices, is the preventive of famine; and the law of self-preservation is surer policy than any legislation can be. We concoct eleemosynary systems, and it turns out that our charity increases pauperism. We inflate our paper currency, we repair commerce with unlimited credit, and are presently visited with unlimited bankruptcy.

...We build railroads, we know not for what or for whom; but one thing is very certain, that we who build will receive the very smallest share of benefit therefrom. Immense benefits will accrue; they are essential to the country, but that will be felt not until we are no longer countrymen.... We plant trees, we build stone houses, we redeem the waste, we make prospective laws, we found colleges and hospitals, for remote generations. We should be mortified to learn that the little benefit we chanced in our own persons to receive was the utmost they would yield.

The history of commerce...is the record of this beneficent tendency.... Trade, a plant which grows wherever there is peace, as soon as there is peace, and as long as there is peace.... Feudalism had been good, had broken the power of the kings, and had some good traits of its own; but it had grown mischievous, it was time for it to die, and, as they say of dying people, all its faults came out. Trade was the strong man that broke it down, and raised a new and unknown power in its place. It is a new agent in the world, and one of great function; it is

a very intellectual force. This displaces physical strength, and installs computation, combination, information, science, in its room.... Trade goes to make the governments insignificant, and to bring every kind of faculty of every individual that can in any manner serve any person, *on sale*.... This is the good and this the evil of trade, that it would put everything *into market*, talent, beauty, virtue, and man himself....

Trade is an instrument in the hands of that friendly Power which works for us in our own despite. We design it thus and thus; it turns out otherwise and far better. This beneficent tendency, omnipotent without violence, exists and works. Every line of history inspires a confidence that we shall not go far wrong; that things mend.... That is the moral of all we learn, that it warrants Hope, HOPE, the prolific mother of reforms. Our part is plainly not to throw ourselves across the track, to block improvement, and sit till we are stone, but to watch the uprise of successive mornings, and to conspire with the new works of new days....

Gentlemen, the development of our American internal resources, the extension to the utmost of the commercial system, and the appearance of new moral causes which are to modify the state, are giving an aspect of greatness to the Future, which the imagination fears to open. One thing is plain for all men of common sense and common conscience, that here, here in America, is the home of man....

## 7

## The Moral Influence of Steam (1846)

C H A R L E S F R A S E R

Nineteenth-century Americans astounded themselves with their own ingenuity. Convinced that their inventions and developments were transforming not only the material world but also the moral world, many American thinkers sought to explain how technological change was altering human nature. In this address de-



livered before the Mercantile Library Association of Charleston, South Carolina, Charles Fraser made the case for steam power's moral agency.

### Questions to Consider

- What, according to Fraser, made the United States so eminently suitable for the development of steam power?
- What is the relation between steam and national development?
- What is its impact on international relations?
- What are the negative effects of steam?

The history of nations is little more than a record of their wars and their commerce; the former carrying with them ruin and desolation; the latter spreading wide the blessings of wealth and civilization. The former drying up every source of moral and social improvement; the latter uniting communities in the bonds of peaceful intercourse, and stimulating to honorable and profitable enterprise....

Thanks to the benign and humanizing spirit of the age in which we live, if there be a maxim universally assented to as the result of the experience of all recorded time, it is that *peace* is the best and truest policy of nations, as it is of the individuals who compose them. The prosperity it promotes, has an all-pervading influence, which not only exalts the *rational* part of creation, by giving it the leisure and the opportunity of cultivating its higher powers, but multiplies the comforts of the *brute*, and mitigates the severity of his labors. Even the inanimate world rejoices beneath its smiles, developing the elements of usefulness in every varied form and modification; and yielding to industry and well directed enterprise, the treasures which Providence has hidden in its bosom, as their noblest reward. And what is commerce, uniting the families of the earth in the bonds of friendly intercourse, and impressing them with the conviction of mutual dependence, but an extension of this great principle?...

How beautiful, then, is the thought, that nature, in rewarding the industry of man by superfluities of products, invites their interchange amongst the remotest nations, and the most opposite climates; and, by that means, unites them in the kindest feelings, and makes her very gifts the bonds of mutual and peaceful intercourse. How grateful, too, the reflection that, at this very moment, the vessels that are wafting from our

shores the productions of our varied climate, and scarcely less varied industry, are also spreading the tidings of the gospel, and carrying with them the oil and the lamp that shall give light to the benighted regions of the earth....

...[A]nd if the discovery of steam, or rather, the development of its powers, in their application to commerce and manufactures, has been reserved for the nineteenth century, it is only because that era exhibits a higher degree of civilization, and therefore, a fitter field for its operations, than was ever before known in the history of society....

...All that the United States wanted, was confidence in the practicability of steam navigation. Nature had already established and smoothed the roads. The vehicle only was wanting; and Robert Fulton constructed that vehicle. At the success of his efforts...a new and glorious light then dawned upon the prospects of our country, cheering the hopes of industry, kindling the ardor of enterprise, and destined, in its highest elevation, not only to multiply blessings on our land, but to shed a kindly influence over the whole human family, uniting them in interest and brotherly feeling, and, above all, in the knowledge of truth....

...Without the steamboat, ages might have passed without such a development of her resources as is now exhibited. The enterprise and industry of the West would have been unrewarded; the progress of civilization would have been slow; the trees of the forest would have still overshadowed the sites of flourishing villages; silence and solitude would have prevailed, where now the busy hum of men resounds, and the inheritance of the hardy pioneer would have been ignorance and barbarism....

If it is the glorious and gigantic tendency of steam navigation, to bring nations together, to dispel the difficulties and prejudices arising from difference of laws, language, and climate, what shall we say of that system of internal intercourse which is now spreading itself

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Source: *Hunt's Merchant Magazine* 6 (1846): pp. 499–515.

universally, uniting the remotest parts of the same country, promoting commercial and personal interchange, and speeding the communication of sentiments, with a velocity that seems to retain the very warmth of the breath that uttered them....

...[Negatively, the] abridgment of human labor to the extent we have seen, has certainly had the most disastrous effects in manufacturing countries. It has overthrown one of the great barriers against licentiousness, which is employment. It has strengthened the line of separation between the higher and lower classes of society; it has increased political discontent; it has weakened attachment to country, and forced the unhappy sufferers to expatriation, as their only refuge. Again, the accelerated action which steam gives to commerce, appears to have imparted a feverish and unhealthy rapidity to all its operations, and to have produced a restlessness unfavorable to the ordinary habits of business, and the staid maxims of prudence and reflection. Speculation, hazardous adventure, fictitious and borrowed capital, all take place of that old-fashioned plain dealing which once looked to a fortune as the reward of a life of thrift and regularity. May we not attribute much of that moral delinquency, which, of late years, has been so rife in our country, to that eagerness after gain which,

looking only at its object, becomes indifferent to the means of attaining it?

Another objection, too much underrated, is the destruction of life and property occasioned by steam; an objection to which the navigation of the American waters has been peculiarly exposed. There is scarce a river or sound, or, indeed, any part of our extensive coast, that has not been the scene of fatal disaster. The frequency of its occurrence, has not only attracted the notice of foreign journals, but has been made the subject of particular investigation by our government; whose conclusion was, that no legislation is competent to remove the evil....

These are, certainly, deplorable evils. But what great revolution was ever unaccompanied by evil? Every sudden change in the policy and condition of society, must be convulsive....

...Let it be remembered that steam, expansive as it is, and capable of such wonderful effects, is but the vapor of a simple element discovered and applied by the ingenuity of man, and, therefore, obedient to the control of his will. *His* is the responsibility for its abuse as an agent, a responsibility which would be aggravated in proportion to his knowledge of the happy results it is capable of producing....

## 8

## Lowell (1846)

### JOHN AVERY, VOICE OF INDUSTRY, and THE HARBINGER

The factory system, which proponents saw perfected in the mills at Lowell, Massachusetts, aroused fear and loathing among the workers themselves. The workers also found a number of allies among the middle class who felt that the mass employment of women was destructive to public health and morals. The first excerpt describes the recruitment of workers in the countryside of New England, while the second is an account of a visit to the mills themselves. The third selection contains the actual rules to which workers at the Lowell mills were expected to adhere.



## Questions to Consider

- Why do the critics of the factory system compare the Lowell system to Southern slavery?
- How would the managers of Lowell have responded to this comparison and the other criticisms of their factories?

## 1. Recruitment

From the *Voice of Industry*, January 2, 1846;  
quoting the *Cabotville Chronicle*.

...We were not aware until within a few days, of the *modus operandi* of the Factory powers in this village, of forcing poor girls from their quiet homes, to become their tools, and like the southern slaves, to give up her life and liberty to the heartless tyrants and task-masters. Observing a singular looking, "long, low, black" wagon passing along the street, we made inquiries respecting it, and were informed that it was what we term "a slaver." She makes regular trips to the north of the state, cruising around in Vermont and New Hampshire, with a "commander" whose heart must be as black as his craft, who is paid a dollar a head, for all he brings to the market, and more in proportion to the distance—If they bring them from such a distance that they cannot easily get back. This is done by "hoisting false colors," and representing to the girls, that they can tend more machinery than is possible, and that the work is so very neat, and the wages such, that they can dress in silks and spend half their time in reading. Now, is this true? Let those girls who have been thus deceived, answer.

Let us say a word in regard to the manner in which they are stowed, in the wagon, which may find a similarity only in the manner in which slaves are fastened in the hold of a vessel. It is long, and the seats so close that it must be very inconvenient. Is there any humanity in this? Philanthropists may talk of negro slavery, but it would be well first to endeavor to emancipate the slaves at home. Let us not stretch our ears to catch the sound of the lash on the flesh of the oppressed black while the oppressed in our very midst are crying out in thunder tones, and calling upon us for assistance.

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Source: John R. Commons et al., eds., *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society* (Cleveland, Ohio, 1910), 7: pp. 132–136, 141.

## 2. A Visit to Lowell

From *The Harbinger*, November 14, 1846.

We have lately visited the cities of Lowell and Manchester, and have had an opportunity of examining the factory system more closely than before. We had distrusted the accounts, which we had heard from persons engaged in the Labor Reform, now beginning to agitate New England; we could scarcely credit the statements made in relation to the exhausting nature of the labor in the mills, and to the manner in which the young women, the operatives, lived in their boarding-houses, six sleeping in a room, poorly ventilated.

We went through many of the mills, talked particularly to a large number of the operatives, and ate at their boarding-houses, on purpose to ascertain by personal inspection the facts of the case. We assure our readers that very little information is possessed, and no correct judgments formed, by the public at large, of our factory system, which is the first germ of the Industrial or Commercial Feudalism, that is to spread over our land...

In Lowell live between seven and eight thousand young women, who are generally daughters of farmers of the different States of New England; some of them are members of families that were rich the generation before...

The operatives work thirteen hours a day in the summer time, and from daylight to dark in the winter. At half past four in the morning the factory bell rings, and at five the girls must be in the mills. A clerk, placed as a watch, observes those who are a few minutes behind the time, and effectual means are taken to stimulate to punctuality. This is the morning commencement of the industrial discipline—(should we not rather say industrial tyranny?) which is established in these Associations of this moral and Christian community. At seven the girls are allowed thirty minutes for breakfast, and at noon thirty minutes more for dinner, except during the first quarter of the year, when the time is extended to forty-five minutes. But within this time they must hurry

to their boarding-houses and return to the factory, and that through the hot sun, or the rain and cold. A meal eaten under such circumstances must be quite unfavorable to digestion and health, as any medical man will inform us. At seven o'clock in the evening the factory bell sounds the close of the day's work.

Thus thirteen hours per day of close attention and monotonous labor are exacted from the young women in these manufactories... So fatigued—we should say, exhausted and worn out, but we wish to speak of the system in the simplest language—are numbers of the girls, that they go to bed soon after their evening meal, and endeavor by a comparatively long sleep to resuscitate their weakened frames for the toils of the coming day. When Capital has got thirteen hours of labor daily out of a being, it can get nothing more. It would be a poor speculation in an industrial point of view to own the operative; for the trouble and expense of providing for times of sickness and old age would more than counterbalance the difference between the price of wages and the expense of board and clothing. The far greater number of fortunes, accumulated by the North in comparison with the South, shows that hiring labor is more profitable for Capital than slave labor.

Now let us examine the nature of the labor itself, and the conditions under which it is performed. Enter with us into the large rooms, when the looms are at work. The largest that we saw is in the Amoskeag Mills at Manchester. It is four hundred feet long, and about seventy broad; there are five hundred looms, and twenty-one thousand spindles in it. The din and clatter of these five hundred looms under full operation, struck us on first entering as something frightful and infernal, for it seemed such an atrocious violation of one of the faculties of the human soul, the sense of hearing. After a while we became somewhat inured to it, and by speaking quite close to the ear of an operative and quite loud, we could hold a conversation, and make the inquiries we wished.

The girls attend upon an average three looms; many attend four, but this requires a very active person, and the most unremitting care. However, a great many do it. Attention to two is as much as should be demanded of an operative. This gives us some idea of the application required during the thirteen hours of daily labor. The atmosphere of such a room cannot of course be pure; on the contrary it is charged with cotton filaments and dust, which, we were told, are very injurious to the lungs. On entering the room, although the day was warm, we remarked that the windows were down; we asked the reason, and a young woman answered very naively, and without seeming to be in the least aware that this privation of fresh air was anything else than perfectly natural, that "when the wind blew, the threads

did not work so well." After we had been in the room for fifteen or twenty minutes, we found ourselves, as did the persons who accompanied us, in quite a perspiration, produced by a certain moisture which we observed in the air, as well as by the heat...

The young women sleep upon an average six in a room; three beds to a room. There is no privacy, no retirement here; it is almost impossible to read or write alone, as the parlor is full and so many sleep in the same chamber. A young woman remarked to us, if she had a letter to write, she did it on the head band-box, sitting on a trunk, as there was not space for a table. So live and toil the young women of country in the boarding-houses and manufactories which the rich and influential of our land have for them.

### 3. Factory Rules

From the *Handbook to Lowell* (1848), p. 42–44.

REGULATIONS TO BE OBSERVED by all persons employed in the factories of the Hamilton Manufacturing Company. The overseers are to be always in their rooms at the starting of the mill, and not absent unnecessarily during working hours. They are to see that those employed in their rooms, are in their places in due season, and keep a correct account of their time work. They may grant leave of absence to those employed under them, when they have spare hands to supply their places, and not otherwise, except in cases of absolute necessity.

All persons in the employ of the Hamilton Manufacturing Company, are to observe the regulations of room where they are employed. They are not to be absent from their work without the consent of the overseer, except in cases of sickness, and then they are to send him word of the cause of their absence. They are to board in one of the houses of the company and give information at the counting room, where they board, when they begin, or, whenever they change their boarding place; and are to observe the regulations of their boarding-house.

Those intending to leave the employment of the company, are to give at least two weeks' notice thereof to their overseer.

All persons entering into the employment of the company, are considered as engaged for twelve months, and those who leave sooner, or do not comply with all these regulations, will not be entitled to a regular discharge.

The company will not employ any one who is habitually absent from public worship on the Sabbath, or known to be guilty of immorality. A physician will at-



tend once in every month at the counting-room, to vaccinate all who may need it, free of expense.

Any one who shall take from the mills or the yard, any yarn, cloth or other article belonging to the company, will be considered guilty of stealing and be liable to prosecution.

Payment will be made monthly, including board and wages. The accounts will be made up to the last

Saturday but one in every month, and paid in the course of the following week.

These regulations are considered part of the contract, with which all persons entering into the employment of the Hamilton Manufacturing Company, engage to comply.

JOHN AVERY, AGENT.

## 9

# *Civil Disobedience (1849)*

H E N R Y   D A V I D   T H O R E A U

In 1841, a schoolteacher in Concord, Massachusetts, Henry David Thoreau quit his job and devoted himself to writing. Thanks largely to the support of Ralph Emerson and other transcendentalists, Thoreau was able to live a simple life studying nature and writing in his journals. Throughout these years, Thoreau refused to pay his poll tax, insisting that it supported a government he did not. No one paid much attention until after the Mexican War began, when his refusal suddenly took on a more powerful political meaning. Thoreau was arrested and held for one night, but was released in the morning when a woman admirer paid his bill. The essay that Thoreau wrote on this experience and what it meant to him attracted very little attention at the time. Sixty years later, though, Gandhi would come upon the essay and credit it with inspiring his theory of nonresistance.

### Questions to Consider

- What is the significance of Thoreau's very brief stay in jail?
- Why should the resister avoid the use of violence?
- How can one person constitute a majority?

I heartily accept the motto—"That government is best which governs least"; and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe,— "That government is best which governs not at all"; and

when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have. Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient.

...I ask for, not at once no government, but at once a better government. Let every man make known what kind of government would command his respect, and that will be one step toward obtaining it....

The mass of men serve the state thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies. They are the

Source: *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau* (10 vols.; Boston, 1893), 10: pp. 131–170.

standing army, and the militia, jailers, constables, posse comitatus, etc. In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgment or of the moral sense; but they put themselves on a level with wood and earth and stones; and wooden men can perhaps be manufactured that will serve the purpose as well....

It is not a man's duty, as a matter of course, to devote himself to the eradication of any, even the most enormous, wrong; he may still properly have other concerns to engage him; but it is his duty, at least, to wash his hands of it, and, if he gives it no thought longer, not to give it practically his support. If I devote myself to other pursuits and contemplations, I must first see, at least, that I do not pursue them sitting upon another man's shoulders. I must get off him first, that he may pursue his contemplations too. See what gross inconsistency is tolerated. I have heard some of my townsmen say, "I should like to have them order me out to help put down an insurrection of the slaves, or to march to Mexico; see if I would go"; and yet these very men have each, directly by their allegiance, and so indirectly, at least, by their money, furnished a substitute. The soldier is applauded who refuses to serve in an unjust war by those who do not refuse to sustain the unjust government which makes the war;...as if the state were penitent to that degree that it hired one to scourge it while it sinned, but not to that degree that it left off sinning for a moment. Thus, under the name of Order and Civil Government, we are all made at last to pay homage to and support our own meanness....

Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once? Men generally, under such a government as this, think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter them. They think that, if they should resist, the remedy would be worse than the evil. But it is the fault of the government itself that the remedy is worse than the evil. It makes it worse. Why is it not more apt to anticipate and provide for reform? Why does it not cherish its wise minority?...Why does it always crucify Christ, and excommunicate Copernicus and Luther, and pronounce Washington and Franklin rebels?...

I do not hesitate to say, that those who call themselves Abolitionists should at once effectually withdraw their support, both in person and property, from the government of Massachusetts, and not wait till they constitute a majority of one, before they suffer the right to prevail through them. I think that it is enough if they have God on their side, without waiting for that other one. Moreover, any man more right than his neighbors constitutes a majority of one already.

I meet this American government, or its representative, the State government, directly, and face to face, once a year—no more—in the person of its tax-

gatherer; this is the only mode in which a man situated as I am necessarily meets it; and it then says distinctly, Recognize me; and the simplest, the most effectual, and, in the present posture of affairs, the indispensable mode of treating with it on this head, of expressing your little satisfaction with and love for it, is to deny it then...I know this well, that if one thousand, if one hundred, if ten men whom I could name,—if ten honest men only,—ay, if one HONEST man, in this State of Massachusetts, ceasing to hold slaves, were actually to withdraw from this copartnership, and be locked up in the county jail therefor, it would be the abolition of slavery in America. For it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be: what is once well done is done forever. But we love better to talk about it: that we say is our mission....

Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison. The proper place to-day, the only place which Massachusetts has provided for her freer and less desponding spirits, is in her prisons, to be put out and locked out of the State by her own act, as they have already put themselves out by their principles.... Cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence.

A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority; it is not even a minority then; but it is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight. If the alternative is to keep all just men in prison, or give up war and slavery, the State will not hesitate which to choose. If a thousand men were not to pay their tax-bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood. This is, in fact, the definition of a peaceable revolution, if any such is possible. If the tax-gatherer, or any other public officer, asks me, as one has done, "But what shall I do?" my answer is, "If you really wish to do anything, resign your office." When the subject has refused allegiance, and the officer has resigned his office, then the revolution is accomplished. But even suppose blood should flow. Is there not a sort of blood shed when the conscience is wounded? Through this wound a man's real manhood and immortality flow out, and he bleeds to an everlasting death. I see this blood flowing now....

I do not wish to quarrel with any man or nation. I do not wish to split hairs, to make fine distinctions, or set myself up as better than my neighbors. I seek rather, I may say, even an excuse for conforming to the laws of the land. I am but too ready to conform to them. Indeed, I have reason to suspect myself on this head; and each year, as the tax-gatherer comes round, I find myself disposed to review the acts and position of the general and State governments, and the spirit of the people, to discover a pretext for conformity....

The authority of government, even such as I am willing to submit to...is still an impure one: to be strictly



just, it must have the sanction and consent of the governed. It can have no pure right over my person and property but what I concede to it. The progress from an absolute to a limited monarchy, from a limited monarchy to a democracy, is a progress toward a true respect for the individual.... Is it not possible to take a step further towards recognizing and organizing the rights of man? There will never be a really free and enlightened State until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him

accordingly. I please myself with imagining a State at least which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect as a neighbor; which even would not think it inconsistent with its own repose if a few were to live aloof from it, not meddling with it, nor embraced by it, who fulfilled all the duties of neighbors and fellow-men. A State which bore this kind of fruit, and suffered it to drop off as fast as it ripened, would prepare the way for a still more perfect and glorious State, which also I have imagined, but not yet anywhere seen.

## 10

# *The Mexican View of the War* (1850)

R A M O N   A L V A R E Z   E T   A L .

President Polk of the United States tried to justify the War with Mexico in 1846 as a response to a Mexican invasion. The United States completely defeated the Mexicans on the field and succeeded in taking possession of one-third of Mexico in their peace treaty. The Mexican perspective on the war was notably different. From their point of view, their republic was invaded by their aggressive northern neighbor. After the war, the editors of several Mexican newspapers collaborated on a history of the conflict, which was translated into English and published in New York.

### Questions to Consider

- What, in the Mexican editors' view, caused the war with the United States?
- Did they see a pattern in U.S. history?
- Was Mexico entirely blameless?

**T**o contemplate the state of degradation and ruin to which the mournful war with the United States has reduced the Republic, is painful. Nor is it

pleasant to take a retrospective glance in the investigation of the causes which led to this complete overthrow. But without some explanation of the circumstances which brought on hostilities, our work would be imperfect, and would be wanting in clearness and in those acts which ought to be presented to the examination of the civilized world. It is to be hoped that the hard lesson which we have received will teach us to reform our conduct; oblige us to adopt the obvious precautions against

Source: Albert C. Ramsey, ed., *The Other Side: Or Notes for the History of the War Between Mexico and the United States* (New York, 1850), pp. 1–13; 16–32.

its repetition; benefit us by being made acquainted with its bitter fruits; induce us not to forget the mistakes we have committed; and prepare us to stay the impending blows with which ambition and treachery threaten us. The Mexican Republic, to whom nature had been prodigal, and full of those elements which make a great and happy nation, had among other misfortunes of less account, the great one of being in the vicinity of a strong and energetic people. Emancipated from the parent country, yet wanting in that experience not to be acquired while the reins of her destiny were in foreign hands and involved for many years in the whirlwind of never ending revolutions, the country offered an easy conquest to any who might desire to employ against her a respectable force. The disadvantage of her position could not be concealed from the keen sight of the United States, who watched for the favorable moment for their project. For a long time this was carried on secretly, and with caution, until in despair, tearing off the mask, they exposed the plans without disguise of their bold and overbearing policy.

To explain then in a few words the true origin of the war, it is sufficient to say that the insatiable ambition of the United States, favored by our weakness, caused it. But this assertion, however veracious and well founded, requires the confirmation which we will present, along with some former transactions, to the whole world. This evidence will leave no doubt of the correctness of our impressions.

In throwing off the yoke of the mother country, the United States of the North appeared at once as a powerful nation. This was the result of their excellent elementary principles of government established while in colonial subjection. The Republic announced at its birth, that it was called upon to represent an important part in the world of Columbus. Its rapid advancement, its progressive increase, its wonderful territory, the uninterrupted augmentation of its inhabitants, and the formidable power it had gradually acquired, were many proofs of its becoming a colossus, not only for the feeble nations of Spanish America, but even for the old populations of the ancient continent.

The United States did not hope for the assistance of time in their schemes of aggrandizement. From the days of their independence they adopted the project of extending their dominions, and since then, that line of policy has not deviated in the slightest degree.... They desired from the beginning to extend their dominion in such manner as to become the absolute owners of almost all this continent. In two ways they could accomplish their ruling passion: in one by bringing under their laws and authority all America to the Isthmus of Panama; in another, in opening an overland passage to the Pacific Ocean, and making good harbors to facilitate its navigation. By this plan, establishing in some way an

easy communication of a few days between both oceans, no nation could compete with them....

In the short space of some three quarters of a century events have verified the existence of these schemes and their rapid development. The North American Republic has already absorbed territories pertaining to Great Britain, France, Spain, and Mexico. It has employed every means to accomplish this—purchase as well as usurpation, skill as well as force, and nothing has restrained it when treating of territorial acquisition. Louisiana, the Floridas, Oregon, and Texas, have successively fallen into its power. It now has secured the possession of the Californias, New Mexico, and a great part of other States and Territories of the Mexican Republic. Although we may desire to close our eyes with the assurance that these pretensions have now come to an end, and that we may enjoy peace and unmoved tranquillity for a long time, still the past history has an abundance of matter to teach us as yet existing, what has existed, the same schemes of conquest in the United States. The attempt has to be made, and we will see ourselves overwhelmed anew, sooner or later, in another or in more than one disastrous war until the flag of the stars floats over the last span of territory which it so much covets....

The emancipation of our Republic opened a wide door to immigration. They received with open arms the strangers who touched our soil. But the political inexperience of our national governors converted into a fountain of evils a benevolent and purely Christian principle. Immigration, which ought to have equalized the laborious arms to agriculture, manufacture, and commerce, finally resulted in the separation of one of the most important states. It was this which involved us soon in actual, disastrous war....

While the United States seemed to be animated by a sincere desire not to break the peace, their acts of hostility manifested very evidently what were their true intentions. Their ships infested our coasts; their troops continued advancing upon our territory, situated at places which under no aspect could be disputed. Thus violence and insult were united: thus at the very time they usurped part of our territory, they offered to us the hand of treachery, to have soon the audacity to say that our obstinacy and arrogance were the real causes of the war....

From the acts referred to, it has been demonstrated to the very senses, that the real and effective cause of this war that afflicted us was the spirit of aggrandizement of the United States of the North, availing itself of its power to conquer us. Impartial history will some day illustrate for ever the conduct observed by this Republic against all laws, divine and human, in an age that is called one of light, and which is, notwithstanding, the same as the former—one of *force and violence*.



## 11

# A Disquisition on Government (1851)

JOHN C. CALHOUN

John C. Calhoun was the leading political and intellectual defender of the institution of slavery. For more than twenty-five years he carefully crafted the states' rights argument that would serve as the slave owners' core justification for non-interference with their way of life. One of only two vice presidents ever to resign, Calhoun represented South Carolina in the Senate, with a brief break, from 1833 until his death in 1850. Calhoun saw himself as protecting minority rights against the power of the majority. Calhoun fashioned the concept of "a concurrent majority" as the only way to preserve the liberties of minorities—and the only way to keep the Southern states in the Union. Calhoun probably finished the *Disquisition* in 1849, but it was published posthumously in 1851.

## Questions to Consider

- Could slaves be considered a minority whose rights were being trampled by the majority?
- Does the concurrent majority mesh with the Constitution?
- How are communities identified?

The right of suffrage, of itself can do no more than give complete control to those who elect, over the conduct of those they have elected.... But it is manifest that the right of suffrage, in making these changes, transfers, in reality, the actual control over the government, from those who make and execute the laws, to the body of the community and, thereby, places the powers of the government as fully in the mass of the community, as they would be if they, in fact, had assembled, made, and executed the laws themselves, without the intervention of representatives or agents. The more perfectly it does this, the more perfectly it accomplishes its ends; but in doing so, it only changes the

seat of authority, without counteracting, in the least, the tendency of the government to oppression and abuse of its powers.

If the whole community had the same interests, so that the interests of each and every portion would be so affected by the action of the government, that the laws which oppressed or impoverished one portion, would necessarily oppress and impoverish all others,...then the right of suffrage, of itself, would be all-sufficient to counteract the tendency of the government to oppression and abuse of its powers; and, of course, would form, of itself, a perfect constitutional government....

But such is not the case. On the contrary, nothing is more difficult than to equalize the action of the government, in reference to the various and diversified interests of the community; and nothing more easy than to pervert its powers into instruments to aggrandize and enrich one or more interests by oppressing and impoverishing the others....

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Source: Richard K. Cralle, ed., *The Complete Works of John C. Calhoun* (New York, 1883), pp. 13–17, 24–29, 35–36, 48–49, 54–59.

Such being the case, it necessarily results, that the right of suffrage, by placing the control of the government in the community must...lead to conflict among its different interests,—each striving to obtain possession of its powers, as the means of protecting itself against the others.... For this purpose, a struggle will take place between the various interests to obtain a majority, in order to control the government....

As, then, the right of suffrage, without some other provision, cannot counteract this tendency of government, the next question for consideration is—What is that other provision?...

From what has been said, it is manifest, that this provision must be of a character calculated to prevent any one interest, or combination of interests from using the powers of government to aggrandize itself at the expense of the others.... There is but one certain mode in which this result can be secured; and that is, by the adoption of some restriction or limitation, which shall so effectually prevent any one interest, or combination of interests from obtaining the exclusive control of the government, as to render hopeless all attempts directed to that end. There is, again, but one mode in which this can be effected; and that is...to require the consent of each interest, either to put or to keep the government in action. This, too, can be accomplished only in one way,—and that is, by such an organism of the government,...as will, by dividing and distributing the powers of government, give to each division or interest, through its appropriate organ, either a concurrent voice in making and executing the laws, or a veto on their execution. It is only by such an organism, that the assent of each can be made necessary to put the government in motion; or the power made effectual to arrest its action, when put in motion;...by rendering it impossible to put or to keep it in action, without the concurrent consent of all.

Such an organism as this, combined with the right of suffrage, constitutes, in fact, the elements of constitutional government. The one, by rendering those who make and execute the laws responsible to those whom they operate, prevents the rulers from oppressing the ruled; and the other, by making it impossible for any one interest or combination of interests or class, or order, or portion of the community, to obtain exclusive control prevents any one of them from oppressing the other....

It results, from what has been said, that there are two different modes in which the sense of the community may be taken; one, simply by the right of suffrage, unaided; the other, by the right through a proper organism. Each collects the sense of the majority. But one regards numbers only, and considers the whole community as a unit, having but one common interest throughout; and collects the sense of the greater number of the whole, as that of the community. The other,

on the contrary, regards interests as well as numbers;—considering the community as made up of different and conflicting interests,...and takes the sense of each, through its majority or appropriate organ, and the united sense of all, as the sense of the entire community. The former of these I shall call the numerical, or absolute majority; and the latter, the concurrent, or constitutional majority. I call it the constitutional majority, because it is an essential element in every constitutional government.... So great is the difference, politically speaking, between the two majorities, that they cannot be confounded, without leading to great and fatal errors....

The necessary consequence of taking the sense of the community by the concurrent majority is...to give to each interest or portion of the community a negative on the others. It is this mutual negative among its various conflicting interests, which invests each with the power of protecting itself.... Without this there can be no systematic, peaceful, or effective resistance to the natural tendency of each to come into conflict with the others: and without this there can be no constitution. It is this negative power,—the power of preventing or arresting the action of the government...—which, in fact, forms the constitution. They are all but different names for the negative power. In all its forms, and under all its names, it results from the concurrent majority. Without this there can be no negative; and, without a negative, no constitution....

The concurrent majority, on the other hand, tends to unite the most opposite and conflicting interests, and to blend the whole in one common attachment to the country. By giving to each interest...the power of self-protection, all strife and struggle between them for ascendancy, is prevented.... Each sees and feels that it can best promote its own prosperity by conciliating the goodwill, and promoting the prosperity of the others. And hence, there will be diffused throughout the whole community kind feelings between its different portions....

It follows, from what has been stated, that it is a great and dangerous error to suppose that all people are equally entitled to liberty. It is a reward to be earned, not a blessing to be gratuitously lavished on all alike;—a reward reserved for the intelligent, the patriotic, the virtuous and deserving;—and not a boon to be bestowed on a people too ignorant, degraded and vicious, to be capable either of appreciating or of enjoying it....

There is another error, not less great and dangerous, usually associated with the one which has just been considered. I refer to the opinion, that liberty and equality are so intimately united, that liberty cannot be perfect without perfect equality....

These great and dangerous errors have their origin in the prevalent opinion that all men are born free and equal; than which nothing can be more unfounded and



false. It rests upon the assumption of a fact, which is contrary to universal observation, in whatever light it may be regarded. It is, indeed, difficult to explain how an opinion so destitute of all sound reason, ever could have been so extensively entertained, unless we regard it as being confounded with another, which has some semblance of truth;...to the assertion, that all men are equal in the state of nature; meaning, by a state of nature.... If such a state ever did exist, all men would have been, indeed, free and equal in it; that is, free to do as

they pleased, and exempt from the authority or control of others.... But such a state is purely hypothetical. It never did, nor can exist; as it is inconsistent with the preservation and perpetuation of the race.... Instead of being the natural state of man, it is, of all conceivable states, the most opposed to his nature—most repugnant to his feelings, and most incompatible with his wants. His natural state is, the social and political—the one for which his Creator made him, and the only one in which he can preserve and perfect his race....

## 12

# Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852)

H A R R I E T B E E C H E R  
S T O W E

Other than Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, probably no book has had a greater political impact than Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It captivated the North with its romantic terror and not very subtle hints of lurid sexuality. In contrast, Southern slave owners and their supporters loathed the book and its author beyond all reason. The book sold an estimated 300,000 copies in its first year, though it was illegal to buy the book or send it through the mails in the Southern states. Uncle Tom, probably the first sympathetically drawn African-American fictional figure, particularly captured Northern attention. He was clearly the best Christian and noblest person in the book.

### Questions to Consider

- Were all slave owners bad?
- Why did some slaves serve their masters as overseers?
- What would Stowe have the slaves do to combat this evil system?

## Chapter 30

### The Slave Warehouse

A slave warehouse! Perhaps some of my readers conjure up horrible visions of such a place. They fancy some foul, obscure den, some horrible.... But no, inno-

cent friend; in these days men have learned the art of sinning expertly and genteelly, so as not to shock the eyes and senses of respectable society. Human property is high in the market; and is, therefore, well fed, well cleaned, tended, and looked after, that it may come to sale sleek, and strong, and shining. A slave-warehouse in New Orleans is a house externally not much unlike many others, kept with neatness; and where every day you may see arranged, under a sort of shed along the outside, rows of men and women, who stand there as a sign of the property sold within.

Source: Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or, Life Among the Lowly* (2 vols.; Cambridge, MA, 1896), 2: pp. 105–112.

Then you shall be courteously entreated to call and examine, and shall find an abundance of husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, and young children, to be "sold separately, or in lots to suit the convenience of the purchaser;" and that soul immortal, once bought with blood and anguish by the Son of God, when the earth shook, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened, can be sold, leased, mortgaged, exchanged for groceries or dry goods, to suit the phases of trade, or the fancy of the purchaser.

It was a day or two after the conversation between Marie and Miss Ophelia, that Tom, Adolph, and about half a dozen others of the St. Clare estate, were turned over to the loving kindness of Mr. Skeggs, the keeper of a depot...to await the auction....

Tom had with him quite a sizable trunk full of clothing, as had most others of them. They were ushered, for the night, into a long room, where many other men, of all ages, sizes, and shades of complexion, were assembled, and from which roars of laughter and unthinking merriment were proceeding.

"Ah, ha! that's right. Go it, boys,—go it!" said Mr. Skeggs, the keeper. "My people are always so merry! Sambo, I see!" he said, speaking approvingly to a burly negro who was performing tricks of low buffoonery, which occasioned the shouts which Tom had heard.

As might be imagined, Tom was in no humor to join these proceedings; and, therefore, setting his trunk as far as possible from the noisy group, he sat down on it, and leaned his face against the wall.

The dealers in the human article make scrupulous and systematic efforts to promote noisy mirth among them, as a means of drowning reflection, and rendering them insensible to their condition. The whole object of the training to which the negro is put, from the time he is sold in the northern market till he arrives south, is systematically directed towards making him callous, unthinking, and brutal. The slave-dealer collects his gang in Virginia or Kentucky, and drives them to some convenient, healthy place,—often a watering place,—to be fattened. Here they are fed full daily; and, because some incline to pine, a fiddle is kept commonly going among them, and they are made to dance daily; and he who refuses to be merry—in whose soul thoughts of wife, or child, or home, are too strong for him to be gay—is marked as sullen and dangerous, and subjected to all the evils which the ill will of an utterly irresponsible and hardened man can inflict upon him. Briskness, alertness, and cheerfulness of appearance, especially before observers, are constantly enforced upon them, both by the hope of thereby getting a good master, and the fear of all that the driver may bring upon them if they prove unsalable.

"What dat ar nigger doin here?" said Sambo, coming up to Tom, after Mr. Skeggs had left the room. Sambo

was a full black, of great size, very lively, voluble, and full of trick and grimace.

"What you doin here?" said Sambo, coming up to Tom, and poking him facetiously in the side. "Meditatin', eh?"

"I am to be sold at the auction, tomorrow!" said Tom, quietly.

"Sold at auction,—haw! haw! boys, an't this yer fun? I wish't I was gwine that ar way!—tell ye, wouldn't I make em laugh? But how is it,—dis yer whole lot gwine tomorrow?" said Sambo, laying his hand freely on Adolph's shoulder.

"Please to let me alone!" said Adolph, fiercely, straightening himself up, with extreme disgust.

"Law, now, boys! dis yer's one o' yer white niggers,—kind o' cream color, ye know, scented!" said he, coming up to Adolph and snuffing. "O Lor! he'd do for a tobaccer-shop; they could keep him to scent snuff! Lor, he'd keep a whole shop agwine,—he would!"

"I say, keep off, can't you?" said Adolph, enraged.

"Lor, now, how touchy we is,—we white niggers! Look at us now!" and Sambo gave a ludicrous imitation of Adolph's manner, "here's de airs and graces. We's been in a good family, I specs."

"Yes," said Adolph, "I had a master that could have bought you all for old truck!"

"Laws, now, only think," said Sambo, "the gentlemen that we is!"

"I belonged to the St. Clare family," said Adolph, proudly.

"Lor, you did! Be hanged if they ar'n't lucky to get shet of ye. Specs they's gwine to trade ye off with a lot o' cracked tea-pots and sich like!" said Sambo, with a provoking grin.

Adolph, enraged at this taunt, flew furiously at his adversary, swearing and striking on every side of him. The rest laughed and shouted, and the uproar brought the keeper to the door.

"What now, boys? Order,—order!" he said, coming in and flourishing a large whip.

All fled in different directions, except Sambo, who, presuming on the favor which the keeper had to him as a licensed wag, stood his ground, ducking his head with a facetious grin, whenever the master made a dive at him.

"Lor, Mas'r, 'tan't us,—we 's reglar stiddy,—it's these yer new hands; they's real aggravatin',—kinder pickin' at us, all time!"

The keeper, at this, turned upon Tom and Adolph, and distributing a few kicks and cuffs without much inquiry, and leaving general orders for all to be good boys and go to sleep, left the apartment.

While this scene was going on in the men's sleeping-room, the reader may be curious to take a peep at the corresponding apartment allotted to the women.



Stretched out in various attitudes over the floor, he may see numberless sleeping forms of every shade of complexion, from the purest ebony to white, and of all years, from childhood to old age, lying now asleep. Here is a fine bright girl, of ten years, whose mother was sold out yesterday, and who tonight cried herself to sleep when nobody was looking at her. Here, a worn old negress, whose thin arms and callous fingers tell of hard toil, waiting to be sold tomorrow, as a cast-off article, for what can be got for her.... But, in a corner, sitting apart from the rest, are two females of a more interesting appearance than common.

One of these is a respectably-dressed mulatto woman between forty and fifty, with soft eyes and a gentle and pleasing physiognomy. She has on her head a high-raised turban, made of a gay red Madras handkerchief, of the first quality, her dress is neatly fitted, and of good material, showing that she has been provided for with a careful hand. By her side, and nestling closely to her, is a young girl of fifteen,—her daughter. She is a quadroon, as may be seen from her fairer complexion, though her likeness to her mother is quite discernible. She has the same soft, dark eye, with longer lashes, and her curling hair is of a luxuriant brown. She also is dressed with great neatness, and her white, delicate hands betray very little acquaintance with servile toil. These two are to be sold tomorrow, in the same lot with the St. Clare servants; and the gentleman to whom they belong, and to whom the money for their sale is to be transmitted, is a member of a Christian church in New York, who will receive the money, and go thereafter to the sacrament of his Lord and theirs, and think no more of it.

These two... Susan and Emmeline, had been the personal attendants of an amiable and pious lady of New Orleans, by whom they had been carefully and piously instructed and trained. They had been taught to read and write, diligently instructed in the truths of religion, and their lot had been as happy an one as in their condition it was possible to be. But the only son of their protectress had the management of her property; and, by carelessness and extravagance involved it to a large amount, and at last failed. One of the largest creditors was the respectable firm of B. & Co., in New York. B. & Co. wrote to their lawyer in New Orleans, who attached the real estate (these two articles and a lot of plantation hands formed the most valuable part of it), and wrote word to that effect to New York. Brother B., being, as we have said, a Christian man, and a resident in a free State, felt some uneasiness on the subject. He didn't like trading in slaves and souls of men,—of course, he didn't; but, then, there were thirty thousand dollars in the case, and that was rather too much money to be lost for a principle; and so, after much considering, and asking advice from those that he knew would advise to suit

him, Brother B. wrote to his lawyer to dispose of the business in the way that seemed to him the most suitable, and remit the proceeds.

The day after the letter arrived in New Orleans, Susan and Emmeline were attached, and sent to the depot to await a general auction on the following morning; and as they glimmer faintly upon us in the moonlight which steals through the grated window, we may listen to their conversation. Both are weeping, but each quietly, that the other may not hear.

"Mother, just lay your head on my lap, and see if you can't sleep a little," says the girl, trying to appear calm.

"I haven't any heart to sleep, Em; I can't; it's the last night we may be together!"

"O, mother, don't say so! perhaps we shall get sold together,—who knows?"

"If 't was anybody's else case, I should say so, too, Em," said the woman; "but I'm so feard of losin' you that I don't see anything but the danger."

"Why, mother, the man said we were both likely, and would sell well."

Susan remembered the man's looks and words. With a deadly sickness at her heart, she remembered how he had looked at Emmeline's hands, and lifted up her curly hair, and pronounced her a first-rate article. Susan had been trained as a Christian, brought up in the daily reading of the Bible, and had the same horror of her child's being sold to a life of shame that any other Christian mother might have; but she had no hope,—no protection.

"Mother, I think we might do first rate, if you could get a place as cook, and I as chambermaid or seamstress, in some family. I dare say we shall. Let's both look as bright and lively as we can, and tell all we can do, and perhaps we shall," said Emmeline.

"I want you to brush your hair all back straight, tomorrow," said Susan.

"What for, mother? I don't look near so well, that way."

"Yes, but you'll sell better so."

"I don't see why!" said the child.

"Respectable families would be more apt to buy you, if they saw you looked plain and decent, as if you wasn't trying to look handsome. I know their ways better 'n you do," said Susan.

"Well, mother, then I will."

"And, Emmeline, if we shouldn't ever see each other again, after tomorrow,—if I'm sold way up on a plantation somewhere, and you somewhere else,—always remember how you've been brought up, and all Missis has told you; take your Bible with you, and your hymn-book; and if you're faithful to the Lord, he'll be faithful to you."

So speaks the poor soul, in sore discouragement; for she knows that tomorrow any man, however vile and

brutal, however godless and merciless, if he only has money to pay for her, may become owner of her daughter, body and soul; and then, how is the child to be faithful? She thinks of all this, as she holds her daughter in her arms, and wishes that she were not handsome and attractive. It seems almost an aggravation to her to remember how purely and piously, how much above the ordinary lot, she has been brought up. But she has no resort but to pray; and many such prayers to God have gone up from those same trim, neatly-arranged, respectable slave-prisons,—prayers which God has not forgotten, as a coming day shall show....

But now it is morning, and everybody is astir; and the worthy Mr. Skeggs is busy and bright, for a lot of goods is to be fitted out for auction. There is a brisk lookout on the toilet; injunctions passed around to every one to put on their best face and be spry; and now all are arranged in a circle for a last review....

Mr. Skeggs, with his palmetto on and his cigar in his mouth, walks around to put farewell touches on his wares.

"How's this?" he said, stepping in front of Susan and Emmeline.

"Where's your curls, gal?"

The girl looked timidly at her mother, who, with the smooth adroitness common among her class, answers, "I was telling her, last night, to put up her hair smooth and neat, and not havin' it flying about in curls; looks more respectable so."

"Bother!" said the man, peremptorily, turning to the girl; "you go right along, and curl yourself real smart!" He added, giving a crack to a rattan he held in his hand, "And be back in quick time, too!"

"You go and help her," he added, to the mother. "Them curls may make a hundred dollars difference in the sale of her."

Beneath a splendid dome were men of all nations, moving to and fro, over the marble pave...

Various spectators, intending to purchase, or not intending, examining, and commenting on their various points and faces with the same freedom that a set of jockeys discuss the merits of a horse.

"Hulloa, Alf! what brings you here?" said a young exquisite, slapping the shoulder of a sprucely-dressed young man, who was examining Adolph through an eye-glass.

"Well! I was wanting a valet, and I heard that St. Clare's lot was going. I thought I'd just look at his—"

"Catch me ever buying any of St. Clare's people! Spoilt niggers, every one. Impudent as the devil!" said the other.

"Never fear that!" said the first. "If I get 'em, I'll soon have their airs out of them; they'll soon find that they've another kind of master to deal with than Monsieur St. Clare.

'Pon my word, I'll buy that fellow. I like the shape of him."

...Tom had been standing wistfully examining the multitude of faces thronging around him, for one whom he would wish to call master. And if you should ever be under the necessity, sir, of selecting, out of two hundred men, one who was to become your absolute owner and disposer, you would, perhaps, realize, just as Tom did, how few there were that you would feel at all comfortable in being made over to. Tom saw abundance of men,—... every variety of stubbed-looking, commonplace men, who pick up their fellow-men as one picks up chips, putting them into the fire or a basket with equal unconcern, according to their convenience; but he saw no St. Clare.

A little before the sale commenced, a short, broad, muscular man, in a checked shirt considerably open at the bosom, and pantaloons much the worse for dirt and wear, elbowed his way through the crowd, like one who is going actively into a business; and, coming up to the group, began to examine them systematically. From the moment that Tom saw him approaching, he felt an immediate and revolting horror at him, that increased as he came near. He was evidently, though short, of gigantic strength. His round, bullet head, large, light-gray eyes, with their shaggy, sandy eyebrows, and stiff, wiry, sun-burned hair, were rather unprepossessing items, it is to be confessed; his large, coarse mouth was distended with tobacco, the juice of which, from time to time, he ejected from him with great decision and explosive force; his hands were immensely large, hairy, sun-burned, freckled, and very dirty, and garnished with long nails, in a very foul condition. This man proceeded to a very free personal examination of the lot. He seized Tom by the jaw, and pulled open his mouth to inspect his teeth; made him strip up his sleeve, to show his muscle; turned him round, made him jump and spring, to show his paces.

"Where was you raised?" he added, briefly, to these investigations.

"In Kintuck, Mas'r," said Tom, looking about, as if for deliverance.

"What have you done?"

"Had care of Mas'r's farm," said Tom.

"Likely story!" said the other, shortly, as he passed on.

He paused a moment before Dolph; then spitting a discharge of tobacco-juice on his well-blackened boots, and giving a contemptuous umph, he walked on. Again he stopped before Susan and Emmeline.

He put out his heavy, dirty hand, and drew the girl towards him; passed it over her neck and bust, felt her arms, looked at her teeth, and then pushed her back against her mother, whose patient face showed the suf-



fering she had been going through at every motion of the hideous stranger.

The girl was frightened, and began to cry.

"Stop that, you minx!" said the salesman; "no whimpering here,—the sale is going to begin." And accordingly the sale begun.

Adolph was knocked off, at a good sum, to the young gentlemen who had previously stated his intention of buying him; and the other servants of the St. Clare lot went to various bidders.

"Now, up with you, boy! d'ye hear?" said the auctioneer to Tom.

Tom stepped upon the block, gave a few anxious looks round; all seemed mingled in a common, indistinct noise,—the clatter of the salesman crying off his qualifications in French and English, the quick fire of French and English bids; and almost in a moment came the final thump of the hammer, and the clear ring on the last syllable of the word "dollars," as the auctioneer announced his price, and Tom was made over.—He had a master!

He was pushed from the block;—the short, bullet-headed man seizing him roughly by the shoulder, pushed him to one side, saying, in a harsh voice, "Stand there, you!"

Tom hardly realized anything; but still the bidding went on,—rattling, clattering, now French, now English. Down goes the hammer again,—Susan is sold! She goes down from the block, stops, looks wistfully back,—her daughter stretches her hands towards her.

She looks with agony in the face of the man who has bought her,—a respectable middle-aged man, of benevolent countenance.

"O, Mas'r, please do buy my daughter!"

"I'd like to, but I'm afraid I can't afford it!" said the gentleman, looking, with painful interest, as the young girl mounted the block, and looked around her with a frightened and timid glance.

The blood flushes painfully in her otherwise colorless cheek, her eye has a feverish fire, and her mother groans to see that she looks more beautiful than she ever saw her before.

The auctioneer sees his advantage, and expatiates volubly in mingled French and English, and bids rise in rapid succession.

"I'll do anything in reason," said the benevolent-looking gentleman, pressing in and joining with the bids. In a few moments they have run beyond his purse. He is silent; the auctioneer grows warmer; but bids gradually drop off. It lies now between an aristocratic old citizen and our bullet-headed acquaintance.

The citizen bids for a few turns, contemptuously measuring his opponent; but the bullet-head has the advantage over him, both in obstinacy and concealed length of purse, and the controversy lasts but a mo-

ment; the hammer falls,—he has got the girl, body and soul, unless God help her!

Her master is Mr. Legree, who owns a cotton plantation on the Red river. She is pushed along into the same lot with Tom and two other men, and goes off, weeping as she goes.

The benevolent gentleman is sorry; but, then, the thing happens every day! One sees girls and mothers crying, at these sales, always! it can't be helped, &c. and he walks off, with his acquisition, in another direction.

Two days after, the lawyer of the Christian firm of B. & Co., New York, send on their money to them. On the reverse of that draft, so obtained, let them write these words of the great Paymaster, to whom they shall make up their account in a future day: "When he maketh inquisition for blood, he forgetteth not the cry of the humble!"

## Chapter 31

### *The Middle Passage*

...On the lower part of a small, mean boat, on the Red river, Tom sat,—chains on his wrists, chains on his feet, and a weight heavier than chains lay on his heart. All had faded from his sky,—moon and star; all had passed by him, as the trees and banks were now passing, to return no more. Kentucky home, with wife and children, and indulgent owners; St. Clare home, with all its refinements and splendors; the golden head of Eva, with its saint-like eyes;... hours of ease and indulgent leisure,—all gone! and in place thereof, what remains?...

Mr. Simon Legree, Tom's master, had purchased slaves at one place and another, in New Orleans, to the number of eight, and driven them, handcuffed, in couples of two and two, down to the good steamer *Pirate*, which lay at the levee, ready for a trip up the Red river.

Having got them fairly on board, and the boat being off, he came round, with that air of efficiency which ever characterized him, to take a review of them. Stopping opposite to Tom, who had been attired for sale in his best broadcloth suit, with well-starched linen and shining boots, he briefly expressed himself as follows: "Stand up."

Tom stood up.

"Take off that stock!" and, as Tom, encumbered by his fetters, proceeded to do it, he assisted him, by pulling it, with no gentle hand, from his neck, and putting it in his pocket. Legree now turned to Tom's trunk, which, previous to this, he had been ransacking, and, taking from it a pair of old pantaloons and dilapidated coat, which Tom had been wont to put on about his stable-work, he said, liberating Tom's hands from

the handcuffs, and pointing to a recess in among the boxes, "You go there, and put these on."

Tom obeyed, and in a few moments returned.

"Take off your boots," said Mr. Legree.

Tom did so.

"There," said the former, throwing him a pair of coarse, stout shoes, such as were common among the slaves, "put these on." In Tom's hurried exchange, he had not forgotten to transfer his cherished Bible to his pocket. It was well he did so; for Mr. Legree, having refitted Tom's handcuffs, proceeded deliberately to investigate the contents of his pockets. He drew out a silk handkerchief, and put it into his own pocket. Several little trifles, which Tom had treasured, chiefly because they had amused Eva, he looked upon with a contemptuous grunt, and tossed them over his shoulder into the river. Tom's Methodist hymn-book, which, in his hurry, he had forgotten, he now held up and turned over.

"Humph! pious, to be sure. So, what's yer name,—you belong to the church, eh?"

"Yes, Mas'r," said Tom, firmly.

"Well, I'll soon have that out of you. I have none o' yer bawling, praying, singing niggers on my place; so remember. Now, mind yourself," he said, with a stamp and a fierce glance of his gray eye, directed at Tom, "I'm your church now!..."

Something within the silent black man answered No! and, as if repeated by an invisible voice, came the words of an old prophetic scroll, as Eva had often read them to him,—*"Fear not! for I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by name. Thou art MINE!"* But Simon Legree heard no voice. That voice is one he never shall hear. He only glared for a moment on the downcast face of Tom, and walked off. He took Tom's trunk, which contained a very neat and abundant wardrobe, to the fore-castle, where it was soon surrounded by various hands of the boat. With much laughing, at the expense of niggers who tried to be gentlemen, the articles very readily were sold to one and another, and the empty trunk finally put up at auction. It was a good joke, they all thought, especially to see how Tom looked after his things, as they were going this way and that; and then the auction of the trunk, that was funnier than all, and occasioned abundant witticisms.

This little affair being over, Simon sauntered up again to his property. "Now, Tom, I've relieved you of any extra baggage, you see. Take mighty good care of them clothes. It'll be long enough 'fore you get more. I go in for making niggers careful; one suit has to do for one year, on my place."

Simon next walked up to the place where Emmeline was sitting, chained to another woman.

"Well, my dear," he said, chucking her under the chin, "keep up your spirits."

The involuntary look of horror, fright and aversion, with which the girl regarded him, did not escape his eye. He frowned fiercely.

"None o' your shines, gal! you's got to keep a pleasant face, when I speak to ye,—d'ye hear? And you, you old yellow poco moonshine!" he said, giving a shove to the mulatto woman to whom Emmeline was chained, "don't you carry that sort of face! You's got to look chipper, I tell ye!"

"I say, all on ye," he said retreating a pace or two back, "look at me,—look at me,—look me right in the eye,—straight, now!" said he, stamping his foot at every pause.

As by a fascination, every eye was now directed to the glaring greenish-gray eye of Simon. "Now," said he, doubling his great, heavy fist into something resembling a blacksmith's hammer, "d'ye see this fist? Heft it!" he said, bringing it down on Tom's hand. "...Well, I tell ye this yer fist has got as hard as iron knocking down niggers. I never see the nigger, yet, I couldn't bring down with one crack," said he, bringing his fist down so near to the face of Tom that he winked and drew back. "I don't keep none o' yer cussed overseers; I does my own overseeing.... You's every one on ye got to toe the mark, I tell ye; quick,—straight,—the moment I speak. That's the way to keep in with me. Ye won't find no soft spot in me, nowhere. So, now, mind yerselves; for I don't show no mercy!"

The women involuntarily drew in their breath, and the whole gang sat with downcast, dejected faces. Meanwhile, Simon turned on his heel, and marched up to the bar of the boat for a dram.

"That's the way I begin with my niggers," he said, to a gentlemanly man, who had stood by him during his speech.

"It's my system to begin strong,—just let 'em know what to expect."

"Indeed!" said the stranger, looking upon him with the curiosity of a naturalist studying some out-of-the-way specimen.

"Yes, indeed. I'm none o' yer gentlemen planters, with lily fingers, to slop round and be cheated by some old cuss of an overseer! Just feel of my knuckles, now; look at my fist. Tell ye, sir, the flesh on 't has come jest like a stone, practising on nigger—feel on it."

The stranger applied his fingers to the implement in question, and simply said, "'T is hard enough; and, I suppose," he added, "practice has made your heart just like it."

"Why, yes, I may say so," said Simon, with a hearty laugh....

"You have a fine lot there."

"Real," said Simon. "...The yellow woman I got took in on. I rayther think she's sickly, but I shall put her



through for what she's worth; she may last a year or two. I don't go for savin' niggers. Use up, and buy more, 's my way;—makes you less trouble, and I'm quite sure it comes cheaper in the end," and Simon sipped his glass.

"And how long do they generally last?" said the stranger.

"Well, donno; 'cordin' as their constitution is. Stout fellers last six or seven years; trashy ones gets worked up in two or three...When one nigger's dead, I buy another; and I find it comes cheaper and easier, every way."

The stranger turned away, and seated himself beside a gentleman, who had been listening to the conversation with repressed uneasiness.

"You must not take that fellow to be any specimen of Southern planters," said he.

"I should hope not," said the young gentleman, with emphasis.

"He is a mean, low, brutal fellow!" said the other.

"And yet your laws allow him to hold any number of human beings subject to his absolute will, without even a shadow of protection; and, low as he is, you cannot say that there are not many such."

"Well," said the other, "there are also many considerate and humane men among planters."

"Granted," said the young man, "but, in my opinion, it is you considerate, humane men, that are responsible for all the brutality and outrage wrought by these wretches; because, if it were not for your sanction and influence, the whole system could not keep foothold for an hour. If there were no planters except such as that one," said he, pointing with his finger to Legree, who stood with his back to them, "the whole thing would go down like a millstone. It is your respectability and humanity that licenses and protects his brutality."

...The boat moved on,—freighted with its weight of sorrow,—up the red, muddy, turbid current, through the abrupt tortuous windings of the Red river; and sad eyes gazed wearily on the steep red-clay banks, as they glided by in dreary sameness. At last the boat stopped at a small town, and Legree, with his party, disembarked.

## Chapter 33

### Cassy

...Legree took a silent note of Tom.... He rated him as a first-class hand; and yet he felt a secret dislike to him,—the native antipathy of bad to good. He saw, plainly, that when, as was often the case, his violence and brutality fell on the helpless, Tom took notice of it; for, so

subtle is the atmosphere of opinion, that it will make itself felt, without words; and the opinion even of a slave may annoy a master. Tom in various ways manifested a tenderness of feeling, a commiseration for his fellow-sufferers, strange and new to them, which was watched with a jealous eye by Legree. He had purchased Tom with a view of eventually making him a sort of overseer, with whom he might, at times, intrust his affairs, in short absences; and, in his view, the first, second, and third requisite for that place, was hardness. Legree made up his mind, that, as Tom was not hard to his hand, he would harden him forthwith; and some few weeks after Tom had been on the place, he determined to commence the process.

One morning, when the hands were mustered for the field, Tom noticed, with surprise, a new comer among them, whose appearance excited his attention. It was a woman, tall and slenderly formed, with remarkably delicate hands and feet, and dressed in neat and respectable garments. By the appearance of her face, she might have been between thirty-five and forty; and it was a face that, once seen, could never be forgotten,—one of those that, at a glance, seem to convey to us an idea of a wild, painful, and romantic history.... Her complexion was sallow and unhealthy, her cheeks thin, her features sharp, and her whole form emaciated... There was a fierce pride and defiance in every line of her face, in every curve of the flexible lip, in every motion of her body; but in her eye was a deep, settled night of anguish,—an expression so hopeless and unchanging as to contrast fearfully with the scorn and pride expressed by her whole demeanor.

Where she came from, or who she was, Tom did not know. The first he did know, she was walking by his side, erect and proud, in the dim gray of the dawn. To the gang, however, she was known; for there was much looking and turning of heads, and a smothered yet apparent exultation among the miserable, ragged, half-starved creatures by whom she was surrounded.

"Got to come to it, at last,—glad of it!" said one.

"He! he! he!" said another; "you'll know how good it is, Misse!"

"We'll see her work!"

"Wonder if she'll get a cutting up, at night, like the rest of us!"

"I'd be glad to see her down for a flogging, I'll be bound!" said another.

The woman took no notice of these taunts, but walked on, with the same expression of angry scorn, as if she heard nothing. Tom had always lived among refined, and cultivated people, and he felt intuitively, from her air and bearing, that she belonged to that class; but how or why she could be fallen to those degrading circumstances, he could not tell. The woman neither

looked at him nor spoke to him, though, all the way to the field, she kept close at his side.

Tom was soon busy at his work; but, as the woman was at no great distance from him, he often glanced an eye to her, at her work.

He saw, at a glance, that a native adroitness and handiness made the task to her an easier one than it proved to many. She picked very fast and very clean, and with an air of scorn, as if she despised both the work and the disgrace and humiliation of the circumstances in which she was placed.

In the course of the day, Tom was working near the mulatto woman who had been bought in the same lot with himself. She was evidently in a condition of great suffering, and Tom often heard her praying, as she wavered and trembled, and seemed about to fall down. Tom silently as he came near to her, transferred several handfuls of cotton from his own sack to hers.

"O, don't, don't!" said the woman, looking surprised; "it'll get you into trouble."

Just then Sambo came up. He seemed to have a special spite against this woman; and, flourishing his whip, said, in brutal, guttural tones, "What dis yer, Luce,—foolin' a'" and, with the word, kicking the woman with his heavy cowhide shoe, he struck Tom across the face with his whip.

Tom silently resumed his task; but the woman, before at the last point of exhaustion, fainted.

"I'll bring her to!" said the driver, with a brutal grin. "I'll give her something better than camphire!" and, taking a pin from his coat-sleeve, he buried it to the head in her flesh.

The woman groaned, and half rose. "Get up, you beast, and work, will yer, or I'll show yer a trick more!"

The woman seemed stimulated, for a few moments, to an unnatural strength, and worked with desperate eagerness.

"See that you keep to dat ar," said the man, "or yer'll wish yer's dead tonight, I reckon!"

"That I do now!" Tom heard her say; and again he heard her say, "O, Lord, how long! O, Lord, why don't you help us?"

At the risk of all that he might suffer, Tom came forward again, and put all the cotton in his sack into the woman's.

"O, you mustn't! you donno what they'll do to yer!" said the woman.

"I can bar it!" said Tom, "better 'n you;" and he was at his place again. It passed in a moment.

Suddenly, the stranger woman whom we have described, and who had, in the course of her work, come near enough to hear Tom's last words, raised her heavy black eyes, and fixed them, for a second, on him; then,

taking a quantity of cotton from her basket, she placed it in his.

"You know nothing about this place," she said, "or you wouldn't have done that. When you've been here a month, you'll be done helping anybody; you'll find it hard enough to take care of your own skin!"

"The Lord forbid, Missis!" said Tom, using instinctively to his field companion the respectful form proper to the high bred with whom he had lived.

"The Lord never visits these parts," said the woman, bitterly, as she went nimbly forward with her work; and again the scornful smile curled her lips.

But the action of the woman had been seen by the driver, across the field; and, flourishing his whip, he came up to her.

"What! what!" he said to the woman, with an air of triumph, "You a foolin'? Go along! yer under me now,—mind yourself, or yer'll cotch it!"

A glance like sheet-lightning suddenly flashed from those black eyes; and, facing about, with quivering lip and dilated nostrils, she drew herself up, and fixed a glance, blazing with rage and scorn, on the driver.

"Dog!" she said, "touch me, if you dare! I've power enough, yet, to have you torn by the dogs, burnt alive, cut to inches! I've only to say the word!"

"What de devil you here for, den?" said the man, evidently cowed, and sullenly retreating a step or two. "Didn't mean no harm, Misse Cassy!"

"Keep your distance, then!" said the woman. And, in truth, the man seemed greatly inclined to attend to something at the other end of the field, and started off in quick time.

The woman suddenly turned to her work, and labored with a despatch that was perfectly astonishing to Tom. She seemed to work by magic. Before the day was through, her basket was filled, crowded down, and piled, and she had several times put largely into Tom's. Long after dusk, the whole weary train, with their baskets on their heads, defiled up to the building appropriated to the storing and weighing the cotton. Legree was there, busily conversing with the two drivers.

"Dat ar Tom's gwine to make a powerful deal o' trouble; kept a puttin' into Lucy's basket.—One o' these yer dat will get all der niggers to feelin' bused, if Masir don't watch him!" said Sambo.

"Hey-dey! The black cuss!" said Legree. "He'll have to get a breakin' in, won't he, boys?"

Both negroes grinned a horrid grin, at this intimation.

"Ay, ay! Let Mas'r Legree alone, for breakin' in! De debil heself couldn't beat Mas'r at dat!" said Quimbo.

"Wal, boys, the best way is to give him the flogging to do, till he gets over his notions. Break him in!"



"Lord, Mas'r'll have hard work to get dat out o' him!"

"It'll have to come out of him, though!" said Legree, as he rolled his tobacco in his mouth....

"Wal, Lucy was real aggravatin' and lazy, sulkin' round; wouldn't do nothin,—and Tom he tuck up for her."

"He did, eh! Wal, then, Tom shall have the pleasure of flogging her. It'll be a good practice for him, and he won't put it on to the gal like you devils, neither."

"Ho, ho! haw! haw! haw!" laughed both the sooty wretches; and the diabolical sounds seemed, in truth, a not unapt expression of the fiendish character which Legree gave them.

"Wal, but, Mas'r, Tom and Misse Cassy, and dey among 'em, filled Lucy's basket. I ruther guess der weight 's in it, Mas'r!"

"I do the weighing!" said Legree, emphatically.

Both the drivers again laughed their diabolical laugh.

"So!" he added, "Misse Cassy did her day's work."

"She picks like de debil and all his angels!"

"She's got 'em all in her, I believe!" said Legree; and, growling a brutal oath, he proceeded to the weighing-room.

Slowly the weary, dispirited creatures, wound their way into the room, and, with crouching reluctance, presented their baskets to be weighed.

Legree noted on a slate, on the side of which was pasted a list of names, the amount.

Tom's basket was weighed and approved; and he looked, with an anxious glance, for the success of the woman he had befriended. Tottering with weakness, she came forward, and delivered her basket. It was of full weight, as Legree well perceived; but, affecting anger, he said, "What, you lazy beast! short again! stand aside, you'll catch it, pretty soon!"

The woman gave a groan of utter despair, and sat down on a board. The person who had been called Misse Cassy now came forward, and, with a haughty, negligent air, delivered her basket. As she delivered it, Legree looked in her eyes with a sneering yet inquiring glance. She fixed her black eyes steadily on him, her lips moved slightly, and she said something in French. What it was, no one knew; but Legree's face became perfectly demoniacal in its expression, as she spoke; he half raised his hand, as if to strike,—a gesture which she regarded with fierce disdain, as she turned and walked away.

"And now," said Legree, "come here, you Tom. You see, I telled ye I didn't buy ye jest for the common work; I mean to promote ye, and make a driver of ye; and tonight ye may jest as well begin to get yer hand in.

Now, ye jest take this yer gal and flog her; ye've seen enough on't to know how."

"I beg Mas'r's pardon," said Tom; "hopes Mas'r won't set me at that. It's what I an't used to,—never did,—and can't do, no way possible."

"Ye'll larn a pretty smart chance of things ye never did know, before I've done with ye!" said Legree, taking up a cowhide, and striking Tom a heavy blow cross the cheek, and following up the infliction by a shower of blows.

"There!" he said, as he stopped to rest; "now, will ye tell me ye can't do it?"

"Yes, Mas'r," said Tom, putting up his hand, to wipe the blood, that trickled down his face. "I'm willin' to work, night and day, and work while there's life and breath in me; but this yer thing I can't feel it right to do;—and, Mas'r, I never shall do it,—never!"

Tom had a remarkably smooth, soft voice, and a habitually respectful manner, that had given Legree an idea that he would be cowardly, and easily subdued. When he spoke these last words, a thrill of amazement went through every one; the poor woman clasped her hands, and said, "O Lord!" and every one involuntarily looked at each other and drew in their breath, as if to prepare for the storm that was about to burst.

Legree looked stupefied and confounded; but at last burst forth,—"What! ye blasted black beast! tell me ye don't think it right to do what I tell ye! What have any of you cussed cattle to do with thinking what's right? I'll put a stop to it!"

Why, what do ye think ye are? May be ye think ye'r a gentleman master, Tom, to be a telling your master what's right, and what ain't!

So you pretend it's wrong to flog the gal!"

"I think so, Mas'r," said Tom; "the poor crittur's sick and feeble; 't would be downright cruel, and it's what I never will do, nor begin to. Mas'r, if you mean to kill me, kill me; but, as to my raising my hand agin any one here, I never shall,—I'll die first!" Tom spoke in a mild voice, but with a decision that could not be mistaken. Legree shook with anger; his greenish eyes glared fiercely, and his very whiskers seemed to curl with passion; but, like some ferocious beast, that plays with its victim before he devours it, he kept back his strong impulse to proceed to immediate violence, and broke out into bitter raillery.

"Well, here's a pious dog, at last, let down among us sinners!—a saint, a gentleman, and no less, to talk to us sinners about our sins! Powerful holy critter, he must be! Here, you rascal, you make believe to be so pious,—didn't you never hear, out of yer Bible, 'Servants, obey yer masters'? An't I yer master? Didn't I pay down twelve hundred dollars, cash, for all there is inside yer old cussed black shell? An't yer mine, now, body and

soul?" he said, giving Tom a violent kick with his heavy boot; "tell me!" In the very depth of physical suffering, bowed by brutal oppression, this question shot a gleam of joy and triumph through Tom's soul. He suddenly stretched himself up, and, looking earnestly to heaven, while the tears and blood that flowed down his face mingled, he exclaimed, "No! no! no! my soul an't yours, Mas'r! You haven't bought it,—ye can't buy it! It's been bought and paid for, by one that is able to keep it;—no matter, no matter, you can't harm me!"

"I can't!" said Legree, with a sneer; "we'll see,—we'll see! Here, Sambo, Quimbo, give this dog such a breakin' in as he won't get over, this month!"

The two gigantic negroes that now laid hold of Tom, with fiendish exultation in their faces, might have formed no unapt personification of powers of darkness. The poor woman screamed with apprehension, and all rose, as by a general impulse, while they dragged him unresisting from the place.

## 13

# *What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July? (1852)*

F R E D E R I C K D O U G L A S S

It took a special sort of blindness to not admit that slavery contradicted the founding principles of the United States as set forth in the Declaration of Independence. Yet the majority of white Americans carefully avoided the subject while celebrating that revolutionary document every July 4. At an Independence Day celebration in Rochester, New York, in 1852, Frederick Douglass, a former slave and leading abolitionist, dared to confront his audience with a painful truth. Amazingly, many people, even fellow abolitionists, attacked Douglass for his audacity.

### Questions to Consider

- Could a black American hold feelings of patriotism?
- Were white Americans little more than a pack of hypocrites?

**F**ellow-Citizens—Pardon me, and allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here to-day? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to

the national altar, and to confess the benefits, and express devout gratitude for the blessings, resulting from your independence, to us?

Would to God, both for your sakes and ours, that an affirmative answer could be truthfully returned to these questions! Then would my task be light, and my burden easy and delightful. For who is there so cold that a nation's sympathy could not warm him? Who so obdurate and dead to the claims of gratitude, that would not thankfully acknowledge such priceless benefits? Who so stolid and selfish, that would not give his voice to

Source: Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York, 1855), pp. 441–445.



swell the hallelujahs of a nation's jubilee, when the chains of servitude had been torn from his limbs? I am not that man. In a case like that, the dumb might eloquently speak, and the "lame man leap as an hart."

But, such is not the state of the case. I say it with a sad sense of the disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you this day rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity, and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought life and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony. Do you mean, citizens, to mock me, by asking me to speak to-day? If so, there is a parallel to your conduct.

And let me warn you that it is dangerous to copy the example of a nation whose crimes, towering up to heaven, were thrown down by the breath of the Almighty, burying that nation in irrecoverable ruin! I can to-day take up the plaintive lament of a peeled and woe-smitten people.

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down. Yea! we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there, they that carried us away captive, required of us a song; and they who wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."

Fellow-citizens, above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions, whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are to-day rendered more intolerable by the jubilant shouts that reach them. If I do forget, if I do not faithfully remember those bleeding children of sorrow this day, "may my right hand forget her cunning, and may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth!" To forget them, to pass lightly over their wrongs, and to chime in with the popular theme, would be treason most scandalous and shocking, and would make me a reproach before God and the world. My subject, then, fellow-citizens, is AMERICAN SLAVERY. I shall see this day and its popular characteristics from the slave's point of view. Standing there, identified with the American bondman, making his wrongs mine, I do not hesitate to declare, with all my soul, that the character and conduct of this nation never looked blacker to me than on this Fourth of July. Whether we turn to the declarations of the past, or to the professions of the present, the conduct of the nation seems equally hideous and revolting. America is false

to the past, false to the present, and solemnly binds herself to be false to the future. Standing with God and the crushed and bleeding slave on this occasion, I will, in the name of humanity which is outraged, in the name of liberty which is fettered, in the name of the constitution and the bible, which are disregarded and trampled upon, dare to call in question and to denounce, with all the emphasis I can command, everything that serves to perpetuate slavery—the great sin and shame of America! "I will not equivocate; I will not excuse"; I will use the severest language I can command; and yet not one word shall escape me that any man, whose judgment is not blinded by prejudice, or who is not at heart a slaveholder, shall not confess to be right and just.

But I fancy I hear some one of my audience say, it is just in this circumstance that you and your brother abolitionists fail to make a favorable impression on the public mind. Would you argue more, and denounce less, would you persuade more and rebuke less, your cause would be much more likely to succeed. But, I submit, where all is plain there is nothing to be argued. What point in the anti-slavery creed would you have me argue? On what branch of the subject do the people of this country need light? Must I undertake to prove that the slave is a man? That point is conceded already. Nobody doubts it. The slaveholders themselves acknowledge it in the enactment of laws for their government. They acknowledge it when they punish disobedience on the part of the slave. There are seventy-two crimes in the state of Virginia, which, if committed by a black man (no matter how ignorant he be), subject him to the punishment of death; while only two of these same crimes will subject a white man to the like punishment. What is this but the acknowledgment that the slave is a moral, intellectual, and responsible being. The manhood of the slave is conceded. It is admitted in the fact that southern statute books are covered with enactments forbidding, under severe fines and penalties, the teaching of the slave to read or write. When you can point to any such laws, in reference to the beasts of the field, then I may consent to argue the manhood of the slave. When the dogs in your streets, when the fowls of the air, when the cattle on your hills, when the fish of the sea, and the reptiles that crawl, shall be unable to distinguish the slave from a brute, then will I argue with you that the slave is a man!

For the present, it is enough to affirm the equal manhood of the Negro race. Is it not astonishing that, while we are plowing, planting, and reaping, using all kinds of mechanical tools, erecting houses, constructing bridges, building ships, working in metals of brass, iron, copper, silver, and gold; that, while we are reading, writing, and cyphering, acting as clerks, merchants, and secretaries, having among us lawyers, doctors, ministers, poets, authors, editors, orators, and teachers; that, while we are engaged in all manner of enterprises

common to other men—digging gold in California, capturing the whale in the Pacific, feeding sheep and cattle on the hillside, living, moving, acting, thinking, planning, living in families as husbands, wives, and children, and, above all, confessing and worshipping the Christian's God, and looking hopefully for life and immortality beyond the grave—we are called upon to prove that we are men! Would you have me argue that man is entitled to liberty? that he is the rightful owner of his own body? You have already declared it. Must I argue the wrongfulness of slavery? Is that a question for republicans? Is it to be settled by the rules of logic and argumentation, as a matter beset with great difficulty, involving a doubtful application of the principle of justice, hard to be understood? How should I look to-day in the presence of Americans, dividing and subdividing a discourse, to show that men have a natural right to freedom, speaking of it relatively and positively, negatively and affirmatively? To do so, would be to make myself ridiculous, and to offer an insult to your understanding. There is not a man beneath the canopy of heaven that does not know that slavery is wrong for him.

What! am I to argue that it is wrong to make men brutes, to rob them of their liberty, to work them without wages, to keep them ignorant of their relations to their fellow-men, to beat them with sticks, to flay their flesh with the lash, to load their limbs with irons, to hunt them with dogs, to sell them at auction, to sunder their families, to knock out their teeth, to burn their flesh, to starve them into obedience and submission to their masters? Must I argue that a system, thus marked with blood and stained with pollution, is wrong? No; I will not. I have better employment for my time and strength than such arguments would imply.

What, then, remains to be argued? Is it that slavery is not divine; that God did not establish it; that our doctors of divinity are mistaken? There is blasphemy in the

thought. That which is inhuman cannot be divine. Who can reason on such a proposition! They that can, may! I cannot. The time for such argument is past. At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh! had I the ability, and could I reach the nation's ear, I would today pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.

What to the American slave is your Fourth of July? I answer, a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants, brass-fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are to him mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody, than are the people of these United States, at this very hour.

Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the old world, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the every-day practices of this nation, and you will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival.

## 14

## The Voyage to America (1853)

ANONYMOUS

The following article, signed "B," appeared in the *New York Tribune* on December 2 and 5, 1853. The author's description of the journey from England is fairly



standard for the mid-nineteenth century, though it lacks the drama of a mid-ocean storm. In the 1840s and 1850s tens of thousands of poor workers and landless laborers emigrated to the United States from England and Ireland. Driven by poverty and lacking the resources to insist on humane treatment, they were entirely at the mercy of the ship's captain. Very few of these captains had reputations for compassion.

### Questions to Consider

- Given that such reports of the dreadful conditions of emigrant ships were common, what would induce anyone to leave home?
- Could anything have been done to ameliorate the suffering of the emigrants on their transatlantic journey?

Upon this deck the "steerage passengers" will be conveyed to New-York. The height between the two decks, is seven feet. This space is however curtailed some three-fourths of a foot by the beams which support the upper deck. However, as the law demands that "not less than six feet of space shall intervene between the decks," we should not grumble.

Between the fore and after steerages, a partition has been erected. Formerly both sexes were lodged together, and sometimes men and women were placed in the same berth, without regard to decency or consanguinity. By formerly, I mean not more than four years ago. By a recent act of Parliament, the sexes are now divided, the males occupying the forward and the females the after steerages. The law, however, is far from being enforced....

On this deck, extending the whole length of the ship, 440 human beings will eat, drink, and sleep; will prepare food for cooking; will keep food for eating; will dress and undress; cleanse and become filthy again, for eight mortal weeks—56 days and nights. We are now, after much rolling and tumbling, supposed to be standing at the extreme end of the ship. At our back are the stern windows, through which a little light struggles; and when, as now, there is no probability of the water dashing in, they are opened, and a little wholesome air admitted. The width of the ship at this point is hardly 28 feet; at the center she swells out some 10 feet more. The steerage looks like a long and gloomy tunnel, its roof broken at distant intervals by hatchways, down whose shaft-like apertures the light of day descends. Each side of this tunnel exhibits two ranges of shelves, the extreme ends of which are lost in the murky dis-

tance. These shelves are suspended from the upper deck by iron braces, and designed to "accommodate" the passengers—they are "the sleeping apartments." The berths are six feet in length and 18 inches in width, with a partition six inches in height between every four berths.... The berths are composed of common pine boards.... From the deck to the bottom of a berth is about 18 inches, from the bottom of a lower berth to that above it is two feet and a few inches, and the same from the bottom of the top berth to the deck above. Thus people sleep in two layers, on each side of the ship, as close together as it is possible to stow them. There is no attempt at classification; the vicious and the virtuous lie side by side in the steerage of an emigrant ship.

It will of course be imagined that an ample supply of fresh air makes up for the density of the packing...

With such a heterogeneous mass of luggage, it would be very difficult for air, if supplied ever so liberally, to have a free circulation; but as the quantity furnished is exceedingly limited, the atmosphere of the steerage is always fetid.

All the light admitted into the steerage finds its way through the hatchways, stern-ports and a few side-ports. The air is admitted from the hatchways and down three tubes, or chimney-like pipes, called "ventilators." These tubes run through to the spar-deck, where their open mouths are faced to the wind. The diameter of each is about twelve inches. By such means all the light and air is supplied which 440 "£2 10s. or £3 passengers" are supposed to require, or at any rate are entitled to...

The Government Inspector has gone below with the Captain, I presume to fulfill the duties of his office. That is to inspect the stores of water and provisions, and to certify that all the requirements of the law have been complied with. Presently they return from the cabin, apparently on very friendly terms with each other. The

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Source: John R. Commons et al., eds., *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society* (Cleveland, Ohio, 1910), 7: pp. 81–86.

uninitiated would imagine that the business of inspecting the stores and arrangements of so large a ship would require a long time, but it occupied less than an hour. It is rumored that the biscuit, flour, oatmeal, and similar stores have been inspected, and their quality and quantity certified to from neat samples displayed in the cabin. Further, that generous wine, and stimulating brandy was provided there, to take off the raw chill of the morning; and that a bank note for £10 has been mysteriously secreted among the officer's papers; which singular circumstance he does not discover until the ship has got her clearance papers signed, and has put to sea. Of course, he resolves to return it when she again arrives in the port; but of course the matter escapes his memory, amid the multitude of circumstances of similar singularity.

I do not say that such rumors are facts; but I do assert that I have heard the second and third officers of the ship jest over the matter, and "reckon our skipper is a smart fellow," when she had been to sea but 30 days, and the allowance of water was curtailed one-half...

It will have been observed by all who have ever gone down into the steerage of an emigrant ship, even after it has been cleansed and purified and fumigated in the best manner, that there always remains a sickening, death-like odor, exceedingly nauseous and unwholesome. This is the result of the absorption of putrid animal matter by the timber of the ship. The reader will suppose himself on board the emigrant ship, and ten days out from Liverpool. This sickening smell in the steerage has become absolutely poisonous. The impregnated timbers, quickened by the animal heat of so many human beings crowded into the vilely-ventilated steerage, exude a clammy, pestilential sweat, rendering the air doubly deleterious to health, and the emigrants ripe for the ravages of contagious disease...

To turn to matters more to the point, the first consideration among the passengers on arising in the morning would naturally be cleanliness. But for that purpose salt water must be used—fresh was too scarce and valuable. Salt water can only be procured by ascending two long and slippery ladders, and scrambling to the bow of the ship, where a salt-water pump is situated. No washing apparatus is provided, but the passenger has the privilege of setting his wash-bowl upon the deck and performing his ablution as best he may. After this necessary operation has been gone through, breakfast is the next consideration. The passenger has just left the noisome steerage and inhaled pure air; he must again descend, and from the depths of his provision chest or barrel find something for his meal. But this food is unfit to eat; it has absorbed the putrid flavor of the steerage atmosphere; and, instead of possessing nutritious prop-

erties, is disgusting to the stomach and deleterious to health. Perchance, if he is very poor, his food will consist mainly of oaten cake or oat meal porridge. In many instances I have known the emigrant forced to use his meal bag as a pillow, because the perspiration from his skin was less objectionable than the reeking filth of the steerage deck. If he has to make oaten cake he is forced to knead it upon a barrel head, or the top of a box, and these, in the absence of seats, have to serve for that purpose also. After this tasty preparation, it involves a struggle of hours to get the meal cooked, and even then it is often too filthy to be eaten with open eyes, and too nauseous to be retained upon the stomach...

Every morning water was served out. Every morning each passenger that would use it must go for it. Accordingly at the call of the carpenter away the passengers would hurry to get their cans. These vessels for holding water are all purchased of the ship chandler, in Liverpool; in shape they are similar to a varnish can; are made of the poorest apology for single tin, and leak with singular freedom. During the first few days after a ship leaves port the passengers are generally sick, and not having had the precaution to secure their property, it rolls about in every direction, and of course sustains much damage. That will probably account for the diversity of shape, and the entire absence of symmetry in these water cans. The water is carried in the ship's hold, beneath the deck of the steerage. Every passenger is therefore compelled to descend to this disgusting region, and slip and slide about until he receives his allowance. The carpenter is the presiding genius over the dispensing of this and the solid necessities of life. He compels several of the male passengers to descend into the hold and serve out the water. They insert a small pump into a hogshead of water, and pump the fluid into a tub. The carpenter sits upon a chest or barrel on the steerage deck, and takes a board, upon which has been marked the several numbers of the passengers, and calls each from the commencement. The can is passed below, the water measured from the tub, and poured into it, and then returned to the owner. As each person is served, the carpenter inserts a pin in the number of his berth.

This mode of serving out water is attended with great waste, and the passengers never receive a full three quarts. I here unhesitatingly assert that from the time the ship left Liverpool, until she arrived in New York, none of the passengers, as a rule, received more than two quarts of water, instead of "three," as demanded by law and stipulated for by the passage contract. The carpenter, to whom was entrusted the duty of serving the passengers with water and provisions, was the vilest ruffian that ever disgraced humanity...



## 15

# The Progress of Mankind (1854)

G E O R G E B A N C R O F T

Few historians have played such a notable political role as George Bancroft. An ardent admirer of Andrew Jackson, Bancroft devoted his life to finding the wisdom of the people through history and crafting an intellectual justification for democracy. The Democrats rewarded Bancroft with several positions, including Secretary of the Navy, in which position he founded the Naval Academy, and minister to Great Britain and Prussia. The following address, delivered before the New York Historical Society in 1854, sought the outlines of remorseless progress in human history.

## Questions to Consider

- Does history ever demonstrate any retrograde motions?
- Who or what is responsible for human progress?
- What is the role of women in history?

**T**he occasion invites me to speak to you of the NECESSITY, the REALITY, and the PROMISE of the progress of mankind.

Since every thing that is limited suffers perpetual alteration, the condition of our race is one of growth or of decay. It is the glory of man that he is conscious of this law of his existence. He alone is gifted with reason which looks upward as well as before and after, and connects him with the world that is not discerned by the senses. He alone has the faculty so to combine thought with affection, that he can lift up his heart and feel not for himself only, but for his brethren and his kind. Every man is in substance equal to his fellow-man. His nature is changed neither by time nor by

country. He bears no marks of having risen to his present degree of perfection by successive transmutations from inferior forms; but by the peculiarity and superiority of his powers he shows himself to have been created separate and distinct from all other classes of animal life. He is neither degenerating into such differences as could in the end no longer be classified together, nor rising into a higher species. Each member of the race is in will, affection, and intellect, consubstantial with every other; no passion, no noble or degrading affection, no generous or selfish impulse, has ever appeared, of which the germ does not exist in every breast. No science has been reached, no thought generated, no truth discovered, which has not from all time existed potentially in every human mind. The belief in the progress of the race does not, therefore, spring from the supposed possibility of his acquiring new faculties, or coming into the possession of a new nature.

Still less does truth vary. They speak falsely who say that truth is the daughter of time; it is the child of eter-

Source: George Bancroft, *Literary and Historical Miscellanies* (New York, 1855), pp. 482–487, 490–493, 499–501, 506–508, 511–517.

nity, and as old as the Divine mind. The perception of it takes place in the order of time; truth itself knows nothing of the succession of ages. Neither does morality need to perfect itself; it is what it always has been, and always will be. Its distinctions are older than the sea or the dry land, than the earth or the sun. The relation of good to evil is from the beginning, and is unalterable.

The progress of man consists in this, that he himself arrives at the perception of truth. The Divine mind, which is its source, left it to be discovered, appropriated and developed by finite creatures.

The life of an individual is but a breath; it comes forth like a flower, and flees like a shadow. Were no other progress, therefore, possible than that of the individual, one period would have little advantage over another. But as every man partakes of the same faculties and is consubstantial with all, it follows that the race also has an existence of its own; and this existence becomes richer, more varied, free and complete, as time advances. COMMON SENSE implies by its very name, that each individual is to contribute some share toward the general intelligence. The many are wiser than the few; the multitude than the philosopher; the race than the individual; and each successive generation than its predecessor....

Now, by the necessity of the case, the movement of the human mind, taken collectively, is always toward something better. There exists in each individual, alongside of his own personality, the ideal man who represents the race. Every one bears about within himself the consciousness that his course is a struggle; and perpetually feels the contrast between his own limited nature and the better life of which he conceives. He cannot state a proposition respecting a finite object, but it includes also a reference to the infinite. He cannot form a judgment, but it combines ideal truth and partial error, and, as a consequence, sets in action the antagonism between the true and the perfect on the one side, and the false and the imperfect on the other; and in this contest the true and the perfect must prevail, for they have the advantage of being perennial.

In public life, by the side of the actual state of the world, there exists the ideal state toward which it should tend. This antagonism lies at the root of all political combinations that ever have been or ever can be formed. The elements on which they rest, whether in monarchies, aristocracies, or in republics, are but three, not one of which can be wanting, or society falls to ruin. The course of human destiny is ever a rope of three strands. One party may found itself on things as they are, and strive for their unaltered perpetuity; this is conservatism, always appearing wherever established interests exist, and never capable of unmingled success, because finite things are ceaselessly in motion. Another may be based on theoretic principles, and struggle un-

relentingly to conform society to the absolute law of Truth and Justice; and this, though it kindle the purest enthusiasm, can likewise never perfectly succeed, because the materials of which society is composed partake of imperfection, and to extirpate all that is imperfect would lead to the destruction of society itself. And there may be a third, which seeks to reconcile the two, but which yet can never thrive by itself, since it depends for its activity on the clashing between the fact and the higher law. Without all the three, the fates could not spin their thread. As the motions of the solar world require the centripetal force, which, by itself alone, would consolidate all things in one massive confusion; the centrifugal force, which, if uncontrolled, would hurl the planets on a tangent into infinite space; and lastly, that reconciling adjustment, which preserves the two powers in harmony; so society always has within itself the elements of conservatism, of absolute right, and of reform....

There are those who must needs assert for their individual selves the constant possession of that power which the great English poet represents the bad angels to have lost heaven for once attempting to usurp; they are not content with being gifted with the faculty of discerning the counsels of God, and becoming happy by conforming to his decrees, but claim the privilege of acting irrespective of those decrees. Unsatisfied with having been created in his image, they assume the liberty to counteract his will. They do not perceive that cosmical order depends on the universality and absolute certainty of law; that for that end, events in their course are not merely as fixed as Ararat and the Andes, but follow laws that are much older than Andes or Ararat, that are as old as those which upheaved the mountains. The glory of God is not contingent on man's good will, but all existence subserves his purposes. The system of the universe is as a celestial poem, whose beauty is from all eternity, and must not be marred by human interpolations. Things proceed as they were ordered, in their nice, and well-adjusted, and perfect harmony; so that as the hand of the skilful artist gathers music from the harp-strings, history calls it forth from the well-tuned chords of time. Not that this harmony can be heard during the tumult of action. Philosophy comes after events, and gives the reason of them, and describes the nature of their results. The great mind of collective man may, one day, so improve in self-consciousness as to interpret the present and foretell the future; but as yet, the end of what is now happening, though we ourselves partake in it, seems to fall out by chance. All is nevertheless one whole; individuals, families, peoples, the race, march in accord with the Divine will; and when any part of the destiny of humanity is fulfilled, we see the ways of Providence vindicated. The antagonisms of imperfect matter and the perfect idea, of liberty and necessary



law, become reconciled. What seemed irrational confusion, appears as the web woven by light, liberty and love. But this is not perceived till a great act in the drama of life is finished. The prayer of the patriarch, when he desired to behold the Divinity face to face, was denied; but he was able to catch a glimpse of Jehovah, after He had passed by; and so it fares with our search for Him in the wrestlings of the world. It is when the hour of conflict is over, that history comes to a right understanding of the strife, and is ready to exclaim: "Lo! God is here, and we knew it not." At the foot of every page in the annals of nations, may be written, "God reigns."

...It is because God is visible in History that its office is the noblest except that of the poet. The poet is at once the interpreter and the favorite of Heaven. He catches the first beam of light that flows from its uncreated source. He repeats the message of the Infinite, without always being able to analyze it, and often without knowing how he received it, or why he was selected for its utterance. To him and to him alone, history yields in dignity; for she not only watches the great encounters of life, but recalls what had vanished, and partaking of a bliss like that of creating, restores it to animated being. The mineralogist takes special delight in contemplating the process of crystallization, as though he had caught nature at her work as a geometrician; giving herself up to be gazed at without concealment such as she appears in the very moment of exertion. But history, as she reclines in the lap of eternity, sees the mind of humanity itself engaged in formative efforts, constructing sciences, promulgating laws, organizing commonwealths, and displaying its energies in the visible movement of its intelligence. Of all pursuits that require analysis, history, therefore, stands first. It is equal to philosophy; for as certainly as the actual bodies forth the ideal, so certainly does history contain philosophy. It is grander than the natural sciences; for its study is man, the last work of creation, and the most perfect in its relations with the Infinite.

In surveying the short period since man was created, the proofs of progress are so abundant, that we do not know with which of them to begin, or how they should be classified. He is seen in the earliest stages of society, bare of abstract truth, unskilled in the methods of induction, and hardly emancipated from bondage to the material universe. How wonderful is it, then, that a being whose first condition was so weak, so humble, and so naked, and of whom no monument older than forty centuries can be found, should have accumulated such fruitful stores of intelligence, and have attained such perfection of culture!

...It may seem to be at variance with our theme, that as republican institutions gain ground, WOMAN appears less on the theatre of events. She, whose presence

in this briery world is as a lily among thorns, whose smile is pleasant like the light of morning, and whose eye is the gate of heaven; she, whom nature so reveres, that the lovely veil of her spirit is the best terrestrial emblem of beauty, must cease to command armies or reign supreme over nations. Yet the progress of liberty, while it has made her less conspicuous, has redeemed her into the possession of the full dignity of her nature, has made her not man's slave, but his companion, his counsellor, and fellow-martyr; and, for an occasional ascendancy in political affairs, has substituted the uniform enjoyment of domestic equality. The avenue to active public life seems closed against her, but without impairing her power over mind, or her fame. The lyre is as obedient to her touch, the muse as coming to her call, as to that of man; and truth in its purity finds no more honored interpreter.

When comparisons are drawn between longer periods, the progress of the race appears from the change in the condition of its classes; Time knows no holier mission than to assert the rights of labor, and it has, in some measure, been mindful of the duty. Were Aristotle or Plato to come among us, they would find no contrast more complete than between the workshops of their Athens, and those of New York. In their day the bondmen practised the mechanic arts; nor was it conceived that the world could do its work except by the use of slaves. But labor deserves and has the right to be dignified and ennobled, and the auspicious revolution in its condition has begun. Here the mechanic, at the shipyard, or the iron-works, or wherever may be the task of his choice, owns no master on earth; and while, by the careful study and employment of the forces of nature, he multiplies his powers, he sweetens his daily toil by the consciousness of personal independence, and the enjoyment of his acknowledged claim to honor no less than to reward.

The fifty years which we celebrate, have taken mighty strides toward the abolition of servitude. Prussia, in the hour of its sufferings and its greatest calamities, renovated its existence partly by the establishment of schools, and partly by changing its serfs into a proprietary peasantry. In Hungary, the attempt toward preserving the nationality of the Magyars may have failed; but the last vestiges of bondage have been effaced, and the holders of the plough have become the owners of themselves and of its soil....

The reciprocal relation between God and humanity constitutes the UNITY of the race. The more complete recognition of that unity is the first great promise which we receive from the future. Nations have, indeed, had their separate creeds and institutions and homes. The commonwealth of mankind, as a great whole, was not to be constructed in one generation. But the different peoples are to be considered as its component parts,

prepared, like so many springs and wheels, one day to be put together.

Every thing tends to that consummation. Geographical research has penetrated nearly every part of the world, revealed the paths of the ocean, and chronicled even the varying courses of the winds; while commerce circles the globe. At our Antipodes, a new continent, lately tenanted only by the wildest of men and the strangest products of nature, the kangaroo and the quadruped with the bill of a bird, becomes an outpost of civilization, one day to do service in regenerating the world.

In this great work our country holds the noblest rank. Rome subdued the regions round the Mediterranean and the Euxine, both inland seas; the German Empire spread from the German Ocean to the Adriatic. Our land extends far into the wilderness, and beyond the wilderness; and while on this side of the great mountains it gives the Western nations of Europe a theatre for the renewal of their youth, on the transmontane side, the hoary civilisation of the farthest antiquity leans forward from Asia to receive the glad tidings of the messenger of freedom. The islands of the Pacific entreat our protection, and at our suit the Empire of Japan breaks down its wall of exclusion....

The world is just beginning to take to heart this principle of the unity of the race, and to discover how fully and how beneficently it is fraught with international, political, and social revolutions. Without attempting to unfold what the greater wisdom of coming generations can alone adequately conceive and practically apply, we may observe, that the human mind tends not only toward unity, but UNIVERSALITY.

Infinite truth is never received without some admixture of error, and in the struggle which necessarily ensues between the two, the error constantly undergoes the process of elimination. Investigations are continued without a pause. The explanatory hypothesis, perpetually renewed, receives perpetual correction. Fresh observations detect the fallacies in the former hypothesis; again, mind, acting *a priori*, revises its theory, of which it repeats and multiplies the tests. Thus it proceeds from observation to hypothesis, and from hypothesis to observation, progressively gaining clearer perceptions, and more perfectly mastering its stores of accumulated knowledge by generalisations which approximate nearer and nearer to absolute truth.

With each successive year, a larger number of minds in each separate nationality inquires into man's end and nature; and as truth and the laws of God are unchangeable, the more that engage in their study, the greater will be the harvest. Nor is this all; the nations are drawn to each other as members of one family; and their mutual acquisitions become a common property.

...The collective man of the future will see further, and see more clearly, than the collective man of to-day, and he will share his superior power of vision and his attainments with every one of his time. Thus it has come to pass, that the child now at school could instruct COLUMBUS respecting the figure of the earth, or NEWTON respecting light, or FRANKLIN on electricity; that the husbandman or the mechanic of a Christian congregation solves questions respecting God and man and man's destiny, which perplexed the most gifted philosophers of ancient Greece.

Finally, as a consequence of the tendency of the race towards unity and universality, the organization of society must more and more conform to the principle of FREEDOM. This will be the last triumph; partly because the science of government enters into the sphere of personal interests, and meets resistance from private selfishness; and partly because society, before it can be constituted aright, must turn its eye upon itself, observe the laws of its own existence, and arrive at the consciousness of its capacities and relations.

The system of political economy may solve the question of the commercial intercourse of nations, by demonstrating that they all are naturally fellow-workers and friends; but its abandonment of labor to the unmitigated effects of personal competition can never be accepted as the rule for the dealings of man with man. The love for others and for the race is as much a part of human nature as the love of self; it is a common instinct that man is responsible for man. The heart has its oracles, not less than the reason, and this is one of them. No practicable system of social equality has been brought forward, or it should, and it would have been adopted; it does not follow that none can be devised, for there is no necessary opposition between handcraft and intelligence; and the masses themselves will gain the knowledge of their rights, courage to assert them, and self-respect to take nothing less. The good time is coming, when humanity will recognise all members of its family as alike entitled to its care; when the heartless jargon of over-production in the midst of want will end in a better science of distribution; when man will dwell with man as with his brother; when political institutions will rest on the basis of equality and freedom.

But this result must flow from internal activity developed by universal culture; it cannot be created by the force of exterior philanthropy; and still less by the reckless violence of men whose desperate audacity would employ terror as a means to ride on the whirlwind of civil war. Where a permanent reform appears to have been instantaneously effected, it will be found that the happy result was but the sudden plucking of fruit which had slowly ripened. Successful revolutions pro-



ceed like all other formative processes from inward germs. The institutions of a people are always the reflection of its heart and its intelligence; and in proportion as these are purified and enlightened, must its public life manifest the dominion of universal reason.

The subtle and irresistible movement of mind, silently but thoroughly correcting opinion and changing society, brings liberty both to the soul and to the world. All the despotisms on earth cannot stay its coming. Every fallacy that man discards is an emancipation; every superstition that is thrown by, is a redeeming from captivity. The tendency towards universality implies necessarily a tendency towards freedom, alike of thought and in action. The faith of the earliest ages was of all others the grossest. Every century of the Christian Church is less corrupt and less in bondage than its predecessor. The sum of spiritual knowledge as well as of liberty is greater, and less mixed with error now, than ever before. The future shall surpass the present. The senseless strife between rationalism and supernaturalism will come to an end; an age of skepticism will not again be called an age of reason; and reason and religion will be found in accord....

The course of civilization flows on like a mighty river through a boundless valley, calling to the streams from every side to swell its current, which is always growing wider, and deeper, and clearer, as it rolls along. Let us trust ourselves upon its bosom without fear; nay, rather with confidence and joy. Since the progress of the race

appears to be the great purpose of Providence, it becomes us all to venerate the future. We must be ready to sacrifice ourselves for our successors, as they in their turn must live for their posterity. We are not to be disheartened, that the intimate connection of humanity renders it impossible for any one portion of the civilised world to be much in advance of all the rest; nor are we to grieve because an unalterable condition of perfection can never be attained. Every thing is in movement, and for the better, except only the fixed eternal law by which the necessity of change is established; or rather except only God, who includes in himself all being, all truth, and all love. The subject of man's thoughts remains the same, but the sum of his acquisitions ever grows with time; so that his last system of philosophy is the best, for it includes every one that went before. The last political state of the world, likewise, is ever more excellent than the old, for it presents in activity the entire inheritance of truth, fructified by the living mind of a more enlightened generation.

You, BROTHERS, who are joined together for the study of history, receive the lighted torch of civilisation from the departing half-century, and hand it along to the next. In fulfilling this glorious office, remember that the principles of justice and sound philosophy are but the inspirations of common sense, and belong of right to all mankind. Carry them forth, therefore, to the whole people; for so only can society build itself up on the imperishable groundwork of universal freedom.

## 16

# *The Planter's Northern Bride* (1854)

C A R O L I N E H E N T Z

In response to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Southern apologists rushed to defend slavery. A favorite approach was a comparison of the treatment of slaves with that of free laborers in the North. The general assumption was that slaves were cared for in adversity while workers were abandoned to their fate. Caroline Hentz's novel, *The Planter's Northern Bride*, was one of the more popular purveyors of this message.

### Questions to Consider

- Was there any validity to either side of the apologists' equation: pampered slaves versus exploited workers?
- Do you think slaves were quite as content as Hentz portrays them?

## Chapter I

Mr. Moreland, a Southern planter, was travelling through the New England States in the bright season of a Northern spring. Business with some of the merchant princes of Boston had brought him to the North; but a desire to become familiar with the beautiful surroundings of the metropolis induced him to linger long after it was transacted, to gratify the taste and curiosity of an intelligent and liberal mind. He was rich and independent, had leisure as well as wealth at his command, and there was something in the deep green fields and clear blue waters of New England that gave a freshness, and brightness, and elasticity to his spirits, wanting in his milder, sunnier latitude.

He found himself one Saturday night in a sweet country village, whose boundaries were marked by the most luxuriant shubbery and trees, in the midst of which a thousand silver rills were gushing. He was pleased with the prospect of passing the ensuing Sunday in a valley so serene and quiet, that it seemed as if Nature enjoyed in its shades the repose of an eternal Sabbath. The inn where he stopped was a neat, orderly place, and though the landlord impressed him, at first, as a hard, repulsive looking man, with a dark, Indian face, and large, iron-bound frame, he found him ready to perform all the duties of a host. Requesting to be shown to a private apartment, he ordered Albert, a young mulatto, who accompanied him on his journey, to follow him with his valise. Albert was a handsome, golden-skinned youth, with shining black hair and eyes, dressed very nearly as genteelly as his master, and who generally attracted more attention on their Northern tour. Accustomed to wait on his master and listen to the conversation of refined and educated gentlemen, he had very little of the dialect of the negro, and those familiar with the almost unintelligible jargon which delineators of the sable character put into their lips, could not but be astonished at the propriety of his language and pronunciation.

When Mr. Moreland started on his journey to the North, his friends endeavoured to dissuade him from taking a servant with him, as he would incur the danger

of losing him among the granite hills to which he was bound:—they especially warned him of the risk of taking Albert, whose superior intelligence and cultivation would render him more accessible to the arguments which would probably be brought forward to lure him from his allegiance.

"I defy all the eloquence of the North to induce Albert to leave me," exclaimed Mr. Moreland. "Let them do it if they can. Albert," he said, calling the boy to him, who was busily employed in brushing and polishing his master's boots, with a friction quick enough to create sparkles of light. "Albert,—I am going to the North,—would you like to go with me?"

"To be sure I would, master, I would like to go any where in the world with you."

"You know the people are all free at the North, Albert."

"Yes, master."

"And when you are there, they will very likely try to persuade you that you are free too, and tell you it is your duty to run away from me, and set up for a gentleman yourself. What do you think of all this?"

Albert suspended his brush in the air, drew up his left shoulder with a significant shrug, darted an oblique glance at his master from his bright black eyes, and then renewed his friction with accelerated velocity.

"Well, my boy, you have not answered me," cried Mr. Moreland, in a careless, yet interested manner, peculiar to himself.

"Why, you see, Mars. Russell" (when he addressed his master by his Christian name, he always abbreviated his title in this manner, though when the name was omitted he uttered the title in all its dignity),—"you see, Mars. Russell,"—here the mulatto slipped the boot from his arm, placed it on the floor, and still retaining the brush in his right hand, folded his arms across his breast, and spoke deliberately and earnestly,—"they couldn't come round this boy with that story; I've heard it often enough already; I ain't afraid of anything they can say and do, to get me away from you as long as you want me to stay with you. But if you are afraid to trust me, master, that's another thing. You'd better leave me, if you think I'd be mean enough to run away."

"Well said, Albert!" exclaimed Mr. Moreland, laughing at the air of injured honour and conscious self-appreciation he assumed; "I do trust you, and shall surely take you with me; you can make yourself very



amusing to the people, by telling them of your home frolics, such as being chained, handcuffed, scourged, flayed, and burned alive, and all those little trifles they are so much interested in."

"Oh! master, I wish I may find everybody as well off as I am. If there's no lies told on you but what I tell, you'll be mighty safe, I know. Ever since Miss Claudia"—

"Enough," cried Mr. Moreland, hastily interrupting him. He had breathed a name which evidently awakened painful recollections, for his sunshiny countenance became suddenly dark and cold. Albert, who seemed familiar with his master's varying moods, respectfully resumed his occupation, while Mr. Moreland took up his hat and plunged into the soft, balmy atmosphere of a Southern spring morning.

It is not our intention to go back and relate the past history of Mr. Moreland. It will be gathered in the midst of unfolding events, at least all that is necessary for the interest of our story. We will therefore return to the white-walled inn of the fair New England village, where our traveller was seated, enjoying the long, dewy twilight of the new region in which he was making a temporary rest. The sun had gone down, but the glow of his parting smile lingered on the landscape and reddened the stream that gleamed and flashed through the distant shrubbery. Not far from the inn, on a gradual eminence, rose the village church, whose tall spire, surmounted by a horizontal vane, reposed on the golden clouds of sunset, resembling the crucifix of some gorgeous cathedral. This edifice was situated far back from the road, surrounded by a common of the richest green, in the centre of which rose the swelling mound, consecrated by the house of God. Some very handsome buildings were seen at regular intervals, on either side of the road, among which the court-house stood conspicuous, with its freestone-coloured wall and lofty cupola. There was something in the aspect of that church, with its heaven-ascending spire, whose glory-crown of lingering day-beams glittered with a kind of celestial splendour, reminding him of the halo which encircles the brows of saints; something in the deep tranquillity of the hour, the soft, hazy, undulating outline of the distant horizon, the swaying motion of the tall poplars that margined the street far as his eye could reach, and through whose darkening vista a solitary figure gradually lessened on the eye, that solemnized and even saddened the spirits of our traveller. The remembrances of early youth and opening manhood pressed upon him with suddenly awakened force. Hopes, on which so sad and awful a blight had fallen, raised themselves like faded flowers sprinkled with dew, and mocked him with their visionary bloom. In the excitement of travelling, the realities of business, the frequent collision of interests, the championship of oft invaded rights, he had lost much of that morbidness of feeling

and restlessness of character, which, being more accidental than inherent, would naturally yield to the force of circumstances counter to those in which they were born. But at the close of any arbitrary division of time, such as the last day of the week or the year, the mind is disposed to deeper meditation, and the mental burden, whose weight has been equipoised by worldly six-day cares, rolls back upon the mind with leaden oppression.

Moreland had too great a respect for the institutions of religion, too deep an inner sense of its power, to think of continuing his journey on the Sabbath, and he was glad that the chamber which he occupied looked out upon that serene landscape, and that the morning shadow of the lofty church-spire would be thrown across his window. It seemed to him he had seen this valley before, with its beautiful green, grassy slopes, its sunset-gilded church, and dark poplar avenue. And it seemed to him also, that he had seen a fair maiden form gliding through the central aisle of that temple, in robes of virgin white, and soft, down-bending eyes of dark brown lustre, and brow of moonlight calmness. It was one of those dim reminiscences, those vague, dream-like consciousnesses of a previous existence, which every being of poetic temperament is sometimes aware of, and though they come, faint shadows of a far-off world, quick and vanishing as lightning, they nevertheless leave certain traces of their presence, "trails of glory," as a great poet has called them, proceeding from the spirit's home.

While he sat leaning in silence against the window frame, the bell of the church began to toll slowly and solemnly, and as the sounds rolled heavily and gloomily along, then reverberated and vibrated with melancholy prolongation, sending out a sad, dying echo, followed by another majestic, startling peal, he wondered to hear such a funeral knell at that twilight hour, and looked up the shadowy line of poplars for the dark procession leading to the grave. Nothing was seen, however, and nothing heard but those monotonous, heavy, mournful peals, which seemed to sweep by him with the flaps of the raven's wings. Twenty times the bell tolled, and then all was still.

"What means the tolling of the bell?" asked he of the landlord, who was walking beneath the window. "Is there a funeral at this late hour?"

"A young woman has just died," replied the landlord. "They are tolling her age. It is a custom of our village."

Moreland drew back with a shudder. Just twenty. That was *her* age. *She* had not died, and yet the death-bell might well ring a deeper knell over her than the being who had just departed. In the grave the remembrance of the bitterest wrongs are buried, and the most vindictive cease to thirst for vengeance. Moreland was glad when a summons to supper turned his thoughts into a different channel.

There might have been a dozen men seated around the table, some whose dress and manners proclaimed that they were gentlemen, others evidently of a coarser grain. They all looked up at the entrance of Moreland, who, with a bow, such as the courteous stranger is always ready to make, took his seat, while Albert placed himself behind his master's chair. "Take a seat," said Mr. Grimby, the landlord, looking at Albert. "There's one by the gentleman. Plenty of room for us all."

"My boy will wait," cried Mr. Moreland with unconscious haughtiness, while his pale cheek visibly reddened. "I would thank you to leave the arrangement of such things to myself."

"No offence, I hope, sir," rejoined Mr. Grimby. "We look upon everybody here as free and equal. This is a free country, and when folks come among us we don't see why they can't conform to our ways of thinking. There's a proverb that says—'when you're with the Romans, it's best to do as the Romans do.'"

"Am I to understand," said Mr. Moreland, fixing his eye deliberately on his Indian-visaged host, "that you wish my servant to sit down with yourself and these gentlemen?"

"To be sure I do," replied the landlord, winking his small black eye knowingly at his left-hand neighbour. "I don't see why he isn't as good as the rest of us. I'm an enemy to all distinctions myself, and I'd like to bring everybody round to my opinion."

"Albert!" cried his master, "obey the landlord's wishes. I want no supper; take my seat and see that you are well attended to."

"Mars Russell," said the mulatto, in a confused and deprecating tone.

"Do as I tell you," exclaimed Mr. Moreland, in a tone of authority, which, though tempered by kindness, Albert understood too well to resist. As Moreland passed from the room, a gentleman, with a very prepossessing countenance and address, who was seated on the opposite side of the table, rose and followed him.

"I am sorry you have had so poor a specimen of Northern politeness," said the gentleman, accosting Moreland, with a slight embarrassment of manner. "I trust you do not think we all endorse such sentiments."

"I certainly must make you an exception, sir," replied Moreland, holding out his hand with involuntary frankness; "but I fear there are but very few. This is, however, the first direct attack I have received, and I hardly knew in what way to meet it. I have too much self-respect to place myself on a level with a man so infinitely my inferior. That he intended to insult me, I know by his manner. He knows our customs at home, and that nothing could be done in more positive violation of them than his unwarrantable proposition."

They had walked out in the open air while they were speaking, and continued their walk through the poplar avenue, through whose stiff and stately branches the first stars of evening were beginning to glisten.

"I should think you would fear the effect of these things on your servant," said the gentleman,—"that it would make him insolent and rebellious. Pardon me, sir, but I think you were rather imprudent in bringing him with you, and exposing him to the influences which must meet him on every side. You will not be surprised, after the instance which has just occurred, when I tell you, that, in this village, you are in the very hot-bed of fanaticism; and that a Southern planter, accompanied by his slave, can meet but little sympathy, consideration, or toleration; I fear there will be strong efforts made to induce your boy to leave you."

"I fear nothing of that kind," answered Moreland. "If they can bribe him from me, let him go. I brought him far less to minister to my wants than to test his fidelity and affection. I believe them proof against any temptation or assault; if I am deceived I wish to know it, though the pang would be as severe as if my own brother should lift his hand against me."

"Indeed!—I did not imagine that the feelings were ever so deeply interested. While I respect your rights, and resent any ungentlemanlike infringement of them, as in the case of our landlord, I cannot conceive how beings, who are ranked as goods and chattels, things of bargain and traffic, can ever fill the place of a friend or brother in the heart."

"Nevertheless, I assure you, that next to our own kindred, we look upon our slaves as our best friends."

As they came out of the avenue into the open street, they perceived the figure of a woman, walking with slow steps before them, bearing a large bundle under her arm; she paused several times, as if to recover breath, and once she stopped and leaned against the fence, while a dry hollow cough rent her frame.

"Nancy," said the gentleman, "is that you?—you should not be out in the night air."

The woman turned round, and the starlight fell on a pale and wasted face.

"I can't help it," she answered,—"I can't hold out any longer,—I can't work any more;—I ain't strong enough to do a single chore now; and Mr. Grimby says he hain't got any room for me to lay by in. My wages stopped three weeks ago. He says there's no use in my hanging on any longer, for I'll never be good for anything any more."

"Where are you going now?" said the gentleman.

"Home!" was the reply, in a tone of deep and hopeless despondency,—"*Home*, to my poor old mother. I've supported her by my wages ever since I've been



hired out; that's the reason I haven't laid up any. God knows—"

Here she stopped, for her words were evidently choked by an awful realization of the irremediable misery of her condition. Moreland listened with eager interest. His compassion was awakened, and so were other feelings. Here was a problem he earnestly desired to solve, and he determined to avail himself of the opportunity thrown in his path.

"How far is your home from here?" he asked.

"About three-quarters of a mile."

"Give me your bundle—I'll carry it for you, you are too feeble; nay, I insist upon it."

Taking the bundle from the reluctant hand of the poor woman, he swung it lightly upward and poised it on his left shoulder. His companion turned with a look of unfeigned surprise towards the elegant and evidently high-bred stranger, thus courteously relieving poverty and weakness of an oppressive burden.

"Suffer me to assist you," said he. "You must be very unaccustomed to services of this kind; I ought to have anticipated you."

"I am not accustomed to do such things for myself," answered Moreland, "because there is no occasion; but it only makes me more willing to do them for others. You look upon us as very self-indulging beings, do you not?"

"We think your institutions calculated to promote the growth of self-indulgence and selfishness. The virtues that resist their opposing influences must have more than common vitality."

"We, who know the full length and breadth of our responsibilities, have less time than any other men for self-indulgence. We feel that life is too short for the performance of our duties, made doubly arduous and irksome by the misapprehension and prejudice of those who ought to know us better and judge us more justly and kindly. My good woman, do we walk too fast?"

"Oh, no, sir. I so long to get home, but I am so ashamed to have you carry that bundle."

He had forgotten the encumbrance in studying the domestic problem, presented to him for solution. Here was a poor young woman, entirely dependent on her daily labour for the support of herself and aged mother, incapacitated by sickness from ministering to their necessities, thrown back upon her home, without the means of subsistence: in prospective, a death of lingering torture for herself, for her mother a life of destitution or a shelter in the almshouse. For every comfort, for the bare necessities of life, they must depend upon the compassion of the public; the attendance of a physician must be the work of charity, their existence a burden on others.

She had probably been a faithful labourer in her employer's family, while health and strength lasted. He was an honest man in the common acceptance of the word, and had doled out her weekly wages as long as they were earned; but he was not rich, he had no superfluous gold, and could not afford to pay to her what was due to her stronger and more healthy successor; he could not afford to give her even the room which was required by another. What could she do but go to her desolate home and die? She could not murmur. She had no claim on the affection of the man in whose service she had been employed. She had lived with him in the capacity of a hireling, and he, satisfied that he paid her the utmost farthing which justice required, dismissed her, without incurring the censure of unkindness or injustice. We ought to add, without deserving it. There were others far more able than himself to take care of her, and a home provided by the parish for every unsheltered head.

Moreland, whose moral perceptions were rendered very acute by observation, drew a contrast in his own mind, between the Northern and Southern labourer, when reduced to a state of sickness and dependence. He brought his own experience in comparison with the lesson of the present hour, and thought that the sick and dying negro, retained under his master's roof, kindly nursed and ministered unto, with no sad, anxious lookings forward into the morrow for the supply of nature's wants, no fears of being cast into the pauper's home, or of being made a member of that unhappy family, consecrated by no head, hallowed by no domestic relationship, had in contrast a far happier lot. In the latter case there was sickness, without its most horrible concomitant, poverty, without the harrowing circumstances connected with public charity, or the capricious influence of private compassion. It is true, the nominal bondage of the slave was wanting, but there was the bondage of poverty, whose iron chains are heard clanking in every region of God's earth, whose dark links are wrought in the force of human suffering, eating slowly into the quivering flesh, till they reach and dry up the lifeblood of the heart. It has often been said that there need be no such thing as poverty in this free and happy land; that here it is only the offspring of vice and intemperance; that the avenues of wealth and distinction are open to all and that all who choose may arrive at the golden portals of success and honour, and enter boldly in. Whether this be true or not, let the thousand toiling operatives of the Northern manufactories tell; let the poor, starving seamstresses, whose pallid faces mingle their chill, wintry gleams with the summer glow and splendour of the Northern cities, tell; let the free negroes, congregated in the suburbs of some of our mod-

ern Babylons, lured from their homes by hopes based on sand, without forethought, experience, or employment, without sympathy, influence, or caste, let them also tell.

When Moreland reached the low, dark-walled cottage which Nancy pointed out as her home, he gave her back her bundle, and at the same time slipped a bill into her hand, of whose amount she could not be aware. But she knew by the soft, yielding paper the nature of the gift, and something whispered her that it was no niggard boon.

"Oh, sir," she cried, "you are too good. God bless you, sir, over and over again!"

She stood in the doorway of the little cabin, and the dull light within played luridly on her sharpened and emaciated features. Her large black eyes were burning with consumption's wasting fires, and a deep red, central spot in each concave cheek, like the flame of the magic cauldron, was fed with blood alone. Large tears were now sparkling in those glowing flame-spots, but they did not extinguish their wasting brightness.

"Poor creature!" thought Moreland. "Her day of toil is indeed over. There is nothing left for her but to endure and to die. She has *learned* to labour, she must now learn to wait."

As he turned from the door, resolving to call again before he left the village, he saw his companion step back and speak to her, extending his hand at the same time. Perceiving that he was actuated by the Christian spirit, which does not wish the left hand to know what the right hand doeth, he walked slowly on, through an atmosphere perfumed by the delicious but oppressive fragrance of the blossoming lilacs, that lent to this obscure habitation a certain poetic charm.

During their walk back to the inn, he became more and more pleased with his new acquaintance, whose name he ascertained was Brooks, by profession an architect of bridges. He was not a resident of the village, but was now engaged in erecting a central bridge over the river that divided the village from the main body of the town. As his interests were not identified with the place or the people, his opinions were received by Moreland with more faith and confidence than if they issued from the lips of a native inhabitant.

When they returned to the inn, they found Albert waiting at the door, with a countenance of mingled vexation and triumph. The landlord and several other men were standing near him, and had evidently been engaged in earnest conversation. The sudden cessation of this, on the approach of Mr. Moreland, proved that he had been the subject of it, and from the manner in which they drew back as he entered the passage, he imagined their remarks were not of the most flattering nature.

"Well, Albert, my boy," said he, when they were alone in his chamber, "I hope you relished your supper."

"Please, Mars Russell, don't do that again. I made 'em wait on me this time, but it don't seem right. Besides, I don't feel on an equality with 'em, no way. They are no gentlemen."

Moreland laughed.

"What were they talking to you about so earnestly as I entered?" asked he.

"About how you treated me and the rest of us. Why, Mars Russell, they don't know nothing about us. They want to know if we don't wear chains at home and manacles about our wrists. One asked if you didn't give us fodder to eat. Another wanted to strip off my coat, to see if my back wasn't all covered with scars. I wish you'd heard what I told 'em Master, I wish you'd heard the way I give it to 'em."

"I have no doubt you did me justice, Albert. My feelings are not in the least wounded, though my sense of justice is pained. Why, I should think the sight of your round, sleek cheeks, and sound, active limbs would be the best argument in my favour. They must believe you thrive wonderfully on fodder."

"What you think one of 'em said, Mars Russell? They say you fatten me up, you dress me up, and carry me 'bout as a show-boy, to make folks think you treat us all well, but that the niggers at home are treated worse than dogs or cattle, a heap worse. I tell 'em it's all one big lie. I tell 'em you're the best—"

"Never mind, Albert. That will do. I want to think—"

Albert never ventured to intrude on his master's thinking moments, and, turning away in respectful silence, he soon stretched himself on the carpet and sunk in a profound sleep. In the mean time Moreland waded through a deep current of thought, that swelled as it rolled, and oftentimes it was turbid and foaming, and sometimes it seemed of icy chillness. He was a man of strong intellect and strong passions; but the latter, being under the control of principle, gave force and energy and warmth to a character which, if unrestrained, they would have defaced and laid waste. He was a searcher after truth, and felt ready and brave enough to plunge into the cold abyss, where it is said to be hidden, or to encounter the fires of persecution, the thorns of prejudice, to hazard everything, to suffer everything, rather than relinquish the hope of attaining it. He pondered much on the condition of mankind, its inequalities and wrongs. He thought of the poor and subservient in other lands, and compared them with our own. He thought of the groaning serfs of Russia; the starving sons of Ireland; the squalid operatives of England, its dark, subterranean workshops, sunless abodes of want,



misery, and sin, its toiling millions, doomed to drain their hearts' best blood to add to the splendours and luxuries of royalty and rank; of the free hirelings of the North, who, as a *class*, travail in discontent and repining, anxious to throw off the yoke of servitude, sighing for an equality which exists only in name; and then he turned his thoughts homeward, to the enslaved children of Africa, and, taking them as a *class*, as a *distinct race* of beings, he came to the irresistible conclusion, that they were the happiest *subservient* race that were found on the face of the globe. He did not seek to disguise to himself the evils which were inseparably connected with their condition, or that man too oft abused the power he owned; but in view of all this, in view of

the great, commanding truth, that wherever civilized man exists, there is the dividing line of the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the thinking and the labouring, in view of the God-proclaimed fact that "all Creation toileth and groaneth together," and that labour and suffering are the solemn sacraments of life, he believed that the slaves of the South were blest beyond the pallid slaves of Europe, or the anxious, care-worn labourers of the North.

With this conviction he fell asleep, and in his dreams he still tried to unravel the mystery of life, and to reconcile its inequalities with the justice and mercy of an omnipotent God.

## 17

## Despotism in America (1854)

RICHARD HILDRETH

One of the leading historians of his age, Hildreth established the basic economic arguments that would influence the positions of the new Republican Party. By arguing that slave labor was inefficient, Hildreth put Southern defenders of slavery in the uncomfortable position of insisting upon its economic viability.

### Questions to Consider

- To what degree is Hildreth's argument based on economic fact or psychological interpretation?
- Was slave labor inherently nonproductive?

### Effect of Slavery upon the Sources of Wealth.

The public wealth consists in the sum total of the wealth possessed by all the individual members of the

community. Generally speaking a community is wealthy in proportion to the relative number of its members who are possessors of property. A few very rich men may make a great show, and create a false impression as to the wealth of a community; but a large number of small properties added together will far out-run the sum total of a few large ones....

That the slave states of the American Union are excessively poor compared with the free states, is conceded on all hands. The slaves, forming in some of the states, the majority of the population, are incapable of

Source: Richard Hildreth, *Despotism in American: An Inquiry into the Nature, Results, and Legal Basis of the Slave-Holding System in the United States* (Boston: Jewett & Co., 1854), pp. 111–118.

holding property. They are not the owners even of their own labor, and of course they can contribute nothing to the sum total of the public wealth. The class of poor whites, including a large proportion of the free population, are possessed of a very trifling property. Almost the entire capital of the country is in the hands of a comparatively small number of slave-holders; and of the property which they possess, a great portion consists in the minds and muscles of the unprivileged class. In free communities, every man is the proprietor of his own muscles and intellect; but as these commodities however valuable, are not the subject of bargain and sale in the market, they are not usually reckoned as property. Compare the tax valuations of the slave-holding states with that of the free states, and it will be discovered, that almost the only kind of property...which exists at the South, is, the land, and the buildings upon it. Exclude the slaves, and the amount of what is called personal property existing in those states, is exceedingly small; and upon examination it will be found to fall greatly short of the amount of debt always due to the North and to Europe.

In estimating the actual wealth of the slave-holding states, the amount of this debt ought always to be taken into account. A great part of the banking capital of those states is borrowed; and so of the money invested in railroads and other public works. A large proportion of the planters have beside great private debts of their own, secured by mortgage upon their plantations and slaves, many of them being little better than tenants at will to some northern capitalist, to whom all their property in fact belongs.

As the Southern States possess advantages of soil and climate peculiar to themselves, it becomes an interesting inquiry, what is the cause of this comparative poverty?

1. Political economists have generally agreed that labor is the sole source of wealth. Whether this doctrine be literally and absolutely true, may perhaps be doubted; it is however beyond all doubt, that labor is a very principal source of value.

The great motive to labor, the great inducement to exertion, that motive, that inducement which has raised man from the primitive barbarism of the woods to such degrees of refinement and civilization as have yet been attained, has been, expectation of reward. There is in this motive a sort of creative power, which seems to give new strength and alacrity. It even possesses the capacity of making labor delightful. The only other motive powerful enough to overcome the natural indolence of man, is the fear of punishment; but that is a melancholy and miserable motive which seems to add

a new distastefulness to labor, and to wither up the energies of those whom it influences.

Now with respect to the whole unprivileged class, that is to say the principal laboring class in the slave-holding states, their only motive to industry, is this second, this enfeebling motive, the fear of punishment. Their labor is compulsive and reluctant, and its results are proportionably small.

With respect to the other laboring class at the south, to wit, the poor whites, their industry is paralyzed by a fatal prejudice which regards manual labor as the badge of a servile condition, and therefore as disgraceful.... In the slave-holding states of America, agricultural labor is the most derogatory of all, because the labor of the field most assimilates the condition of a freeman to that of a slave. Whenever such notions prevail, they are fatal to public prosperity. Poverty keeps pace with pride.

Take the slave-holding states together, and the free inhabitants are about twice as numerous as the slaves. Yet all the great articles of production in which the wealth of the slave-holding states consists, cotton, tobacco, rice, sugar and flour, are produced almost exclusively by slave labor.

What then is the occupation of the free? One class, the larger slave-masters, contribute absolutely nothing to the public stock. They hardly bestow a thought even upon the management of their own estates. Their sole business is, to receive the income and to spend it. Another class of the free population obtain a livelihood by acting as overseers or viceroys for their richer neighbors. They are thus saved from the degradation of manual labor; but it is a hard service by which they earn their bread. So hard, that it is very seldom performed to the satisfaction of their employers. The planters give a terrible character of the overseers as a class. According to their account, the overseers as a general rule, are ignorant, stupid, obstinate, negligent, drunken and dishonest. For their ignorance they are hardly to blame, considering what scanty means of education this class enjoy. Stupidity and obstinacy are the natural fruits of ignorance. Negligence and drunkenness they learn from their employers; and if overseers are dishonest it is little to be wondered at, considering the temptations and opportunities by which they are surrounded, and the total confusion of all ideas of right and wrong, justice and injustice, which the nature of their employment is likely to produce.

The third and largest division of the privileged class, compelled by absolute want to the disgraceful necessity of manual labor, work with an unwillingness as great as that of the slaves, and with still less of efficiency. The produce of their labor is very small. In general it is



hardly sufficient to support them in that rude and semi-barbarous condition to which they have been accustomed.

The disastrous effects of slave-holding upon free industry, are particularly obvious in the families of the small planters, and of those farmers who possess but five or six slaves. These slaves suffice to perform the labors of the farm, and when the land is fertile the owner of it lives in a rustic plenty. A family of sons grows up around him. He has no occasion for their assistance on the farm, and if he had, they would regard the labor as an intolerable disgrace. The boys grow up in idleness, with little or no education, because there is no system of public instruction, and the father cannot afford to send them to a distance in pursuit of schools. They arrive at man's estate without having been bred to any regular employment.... There are thousands of young men in Kentucky and Tennessee in this unhappy predicament. Full of spirit and ambition, active, capable, eager for some honorable employment; but condemned by the social system of which they form a part, and by the unhappy prejudices against useful industry which that system engenders, to an idleness which presently becomes as irksome to themselves, as it is fatal to the public prosperity....

Thus it appears that one plain and obvious effect of the slave-holding system is, to deaden in every class of society that spirit of industry essential to the increase of public wealth.

2. The spirit of industry is not however alone sufficient for the accumulation of property. Industry quickens production; but to accumulate, it is necessary not only to produce but to save. Economy then, may justly be regarded as the second great source of public wealth.

But to expect any thing like economy from the unprivileged class, would be extremely ridiculous. Economy is like industry, it is like every other virtue,—it never will be exercised unless there is a motive constantly operating to produce it. Now in the condition of servitude no such motive exists. In fact, the motives are all the other way. The slave receives from his master a certain weekly allowance of food. Any attempt to lay by a part of it, would be absurd, for as soon as a store was accumulated, the master, if he discovered it, would stop the allowance till that store was consumed; or at all events, he would immediately diminish an allowance which experience had shown to be more than sufficient.... Is it not plain that he who is incapable of possessing property is alike destitute of motives to produce or to save?

If slaves are improvident with respect to themselves, it is not remarkable that they are still more so with re-

spect to their owners. No matter what occurs, if the cotton house is on fire; if the fences are down, and the cattle destroy the corn;...if there happens one of all the thousand accidents which are always liable to diminish the value of their master's property, and which a little care or foresight might have prevented,—any or all of these occurrences are a matter of perfect unconcern to the slave, nor will he voluntarily lift a finger to prevent them. If indeed he has any feeling about the matter, it is rather an inclination to destroy than to save. He experiences a secret delight, in the losses and sorrows of a master whom he hates.

Nor is economy likely to be practised to any considerable extent by the hiring overseers to whom the management of the great plantations is intrusted. These overseers are frequently changed, and they have little or no interest in the economical management of the property intrusted to their charge.

As little can we look to the conduct of the slave-masters for any exhibition of the virtue now under consideration. It is an old observation that what comes easy goes easy. This saying is verified by the conduct of brigands, pirates, and robbers, and all that class of men who live upon plunder. It applies with equal force and for the same reason, to slave-masters, who generally contrive to spend all they get and to run into debt all they can.

We have thus seen that with respect to the slaves and their owners, idleness and improvidence keep close company. The same is the fact with respect to the poorer class of freemen. Though their resources be next to nothing, they still contrive to imitate in their small way, the careless extravagance of their richer neighbors.

It thus appears that there is a great deficiency of the second principal source of public wealth, to wit, economy, among all classes of the population of the slave-holding states of America.

3. A third great source of public wealth consists in invention, by which is meant, the discovery of new and more productive applications of industry. But to call this great means of increasing the productive power of a community into action, industry must be honorable. That ingenuity which busies itself in observations and experiments for the discovery of means to produce the same effect with less labor, seldom displays itself except in communities in which the useful arts are held in high esteem. Even inventions made elsewhere, are for the most part brought into use with great difficulty, in those societies in which men of education and reflection, if such there are, despise useful industry, and in which the great business of production is intrusted to ignorant and stupid slaves, and to overseers equally ignorant

and stupid.... Ignorance is arrogant, dogmatical, certain that it knows every thing already. The idea of improvement does not enter into all its thoughts. Hence it is that the early progress of a people from barbarism to civilization takes place by such hardly perceptible steps, and is subjected to so many hindrances and interruptions, as almost to discourage the most sanguine believers in human perfectibility, and to have given rise to the common opinion that savage nations are incapable of being civilized; while on the other hand, the history of our own age serves to show, how civilization, once set

fairly in motion, advances with an impulse continually accelerated, and which not even the most serious obstacles can long retard.

The southern states derive no inconsiderable advantage from their close and intimate connection with the free states of the north, of which the social system is so essentially different. By this means the natural effect of the institutions of the south, are to a certain extent counteracted, especially in those newly settled states into which there has been a considerable influx of northern population.

## 18

# *The Progress of Mankind* (1854)

G E O R G E B A N C R O F T

Few historians have played such a notable political role as George Bancroft. An ardent admirer of Andrew Jackson, Bancroft devoted his life to finding the wisdom of the people through history and crafting an intellectual justification for democracy. The Democrats rewarded Bancroft with several positions, including Secretary of the Navy, in which position he founded the Naval Academy, and minister to Great Britain and Prussia. The following address, delivered before the New York Historical Society in 1854, sought the outlines of remorseless progress in human history.

### Questions to Consider

- Does history ever demonstrate any retrograde motions?
- Who or what is responsible for human progress?
- What is the role of women in history?

**T**he occasion invites me to speak to you of the NECESSITY, the REALITY, and the PROMISE of the progress of mankind.

Since every thing that is limited suffers perpetual alteration, the condition of our race is one of growth or of decay. It is the glory of man that he is conscious of this law of his existence. He alone is gifted with reason which looks upward as well as before and after, and connects him with the world that is not discerned by the senses. He alone has the faculty so to combine thought with affection, that he can lift up his heart and

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Source: George Bancroft, *Literary and Historical Miscellanies* (New York, 1855), pp. 482–87, 490–493, 499–501, 511.



feel not for himself only, but for his brethren and his kind. Every man is in substance equal to his fellow-man. His nature is changed neither by time nor by country. He bears no marks of having risen to his present degree of perfection by successive transmutations from inferior forms; but by the peculiarity and superiority of his powers he shows himself to have been created separate and distinct from all other classes of animal life. He is neither degenerating into such differences as could in the end no longer be classified together, nor rising into a higher species. Each member of the race is in will, affection, and intellect, consubstantial with every other; no passion, no noble or degrading affection, no generous or selfish impulse, has ever appeared, of which the germ does not exist in every breast. No science has been reached, no thought generated, no truth discovered, which has not from all time existed potentially in every human mind. The belief in the progress of the race does not, therefore, spring from the supposed possibility of his acquiring new faculties, or coming into the possession of a new nature.

Still less does truth vary. They speak falsely who say that truth is the daughter of time; it is the child of eternity, and as old as the Divine mind. The perception of it takes place in the order of time; truth itself knows nothing of the succession of ages. Neither does morality need to perfect itself; it is what it always has been, and always will be. Its distinctions are older than the sea or the dry land, than the earth or the sun. The relation of good to evil is from the beginning, and is unalterable.

The progress of man consists in this, that he himself arrives at the perception of truth. The Divine mind, which is its source, left it to be discovered, appropriated and developed by finite creatures.

The life of an individual is but a breath; it comes forth like a flower, and flees like a shadow. Were no other progress, therefore, possible than that of the individual, one period would have little advantage over another. But as every man partakes of the same faculties and is consubstantial with all, it follows that the race also has an existence of its own; and this existence becomes richer, more varied, free and complete, as time advances. COMMON SENSE implies by its very name, that each individual is to contribute some share toward the general intelligence. The many are wiser than the few; the multitude than the philosopher; the race than the individual; and each successive generation than its predecessor....

The glory of God is not contingent on man's good will, but all existence subserves his purposes. The system of the universe is as a celestial poem, whose beauty is from all eternity, and must not be marred by human interpolations. Things proceed as they were ordered, in their nice, and well-adjusted, and perfect harmony; so that as the hand of the skilful artist gathers music from

the harp-strings, history calls it forth from the well-tuned chords of time. Not that this harmony can be heard during the tumult of action. Philosophy comes after events, and gives the reason of them, and describes the nature of their results.... All is nevertheless one whole; individuals, families, peoples, the race, march in accord with the Divine will; and when any part of the destiny of humanity is fulfilled, we see the ways of Providence vindicated. The antagonisms of imperfect matter and the perfect idea, of liberty and necessary law, become reconciled. What seemed irrational confusion, appears as the web woven by light, liberty and love.... It is when the hour of conflict is over, that history comes to a right understanding of the strife, and is ready to exclaim: "Lo! God is here, and we knew it not." At the foot of every page in the annals of nations, may be written, "God reigns."

...In surveying the short period since man was created, the proofs of progress are so abundant, that we do not know with which of them to begin, or how they should be classified. He is seen in the earliest stages of society, bare of abstract truth, unskilled in the methods of induction, and hardly emancipated from bondage to the material universe. How wonderful is it, then, that a being whose first condition was so weak, so humble, and so naked, and of whom no monument older than forty centuries can be found, should have accumulated such fruitful stores of intelligence, and have attained such perfection of culture!

...It may seem to be at variance with our theme, that as republican institutions gain ground, WOMAN appears less on the theatre of events. She, whose presence in this briery world is as a lily among thorns, whose smile is pleasant like the light of morning, and whose eye is the gate of heaven; she, whom nature so reveres, that the lovely veil of her spirit is the best terrestrial emblem of beauty, must cease to command armies or reign supreme over nations. Yet the progress of liberty, while it has made her less conspicuous, has redeemed her into the possession of the full dignity of her nature, has made her not man's slave, but his companion, his counsellor, and fellow-martyr; and, for an occasional ascendancy in political affairs, has substituted the uniform enjoyment of domestic equality. The avenue to active public life seems closed against her, but without impairing her power over mind, or her fame. The lyre is as obedient to her touch, the muse as coming to her call, as to that of man; and truth in its purity finds no more honored interpreter....

In this great work our country holds the noblest rank.... Our land extends far into the wilderness, and beyond the wilderness; and while on this side of the great mountains it gives the Western nations of Europe a theatre for the renewal of their youth, on the transmontane side, the hoary civilisation of the farthest an-

tiquity leans forward from Asia to receive the glad tidings of the messenger of freedom. The islands of the Pacific entreat our protection, and at our suit the Empire of Japan breaks down its wall of exclusion....

The world is just beginning to take to heart this principle of the unity of the race, and to discover how fully

and how beneficently it is fraught with international, political, and social revolutions. Without attempting to unfold what the greater wisdom of coming generations can alone adequately conceive and practically apply, we may observe, that the human mind tends not only toward unity, but UNIVERSALITY.

## 19

# *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855)

F R E D E R I C K D O U G L A S S

One of thousands of slaves to steal himself and escape to freedom, Frederick Douglass triumphed over his former masters in becoming the most articulate opponent of slavery. A dynamic speaker and brilliant polemicist, Douglass devoted his life to battling the twin evils of slavery and racism. He published three versions of his autobiography, the first in 1845. *My Bondage and My Freedom* was the most complete exploration of his experience of slavery.

### Questions to Consider

- What is the importance for Douglass of his opening observation that slaves lack a family history?
- Why were slave owners so terrified by the idea of an educated slave?

In regard to the *time* of my birth, I cannot be as definite as I have been respecting the *place*. Nor, indeed, can I impart much knowledge concerning my parents. Genealogical trees do not flourish among slaves. A person of some consequence here in the north, sometimes designated *father*, is literally abolished in slave law and slave practice. It is only once in a while that an exception is found to this statement. I never met with a slave who could tell me how old he was. Few slave-mothers know anything of the months of the year, nor

of the days of the month. They keep no family records, with marriages, births, and deaths. They measure the ages of their children by spring time, winter time, harvest time, planting time, and the like; but these soon become undistinguishable and forgotten. Like other slaves, I cannot tell how old I am. This destitution was among my earliest troubles. I learned when I grew up, that my master—and this is the case with masters generally—allowed no questions to be put to him, by which a slave might learn his age. Such questions deemed evidence of impatience, and even of impudent curiosity. From certain events, however, the dates of which I have since learned, I suppose myself to have been born about the year 1817....

The practice of separating children from their mother, and hiring the latter out at distances too great

Source: Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York, 1855), pp. 34–37, 48, 51–52, 58–60, 80–88, 100–106, 134, 138, 142–147.



to admit of their meeting, except at long intervals, is a marked feature of the cruelty and barbarity of the slave system. But it is in harmony with the grand aim of slavery, which, always and everywhere, is to reduce man to a level with the brute. It is a successful method of obliterating from the mind and heart of the slave, all just ideas of the sacredness of *the family*, as an institution.

...Living here, with my dear old grandmother and grandfather, it was a long time before I knew myself to be a *slave*. I knew many other things before I knew that. Grandmother and grandfather were the greatest people in the world to me; and being with them so snugly in their own little cabin—I supposed it be their own—knowing no higher authority over me or the other children than the authority of grandmamma, for a time there was nothing to disturb me; but, as I grew larger and older, I learned by degrees the sad fact, that the “little hut,” and the lot on which it stood, belonged not to my dear old grandparents, but to some person who lived a great distance off, and who was called, by grandmother, “OLD MASTER.” I further learned the sadder fact, that not only the house and lot, but that grandmother herself, (grandfather was free) and all the little children around her, belonged to this mysterious personage, called by grandmother, with every mark of reverence, “Old Master.” Thus early did clouds and shadows begin to fall upon my path.

...My poor mother, like many other slave-women, had many *children*, but NO FAMILY!

...I say nothing of *father*, for he is shrouded in a mystery I have never been able to penetrate. Slavery does away with fathers, as it does away with families. Slavery has no use for either fathers or families, and its laws do not recognize their existence in the social arrangements of the plantation. When they *do* exist, they are not the outgrowths of slavery, but are antagonistic to that system. The order of civilization is reversed here. The name of the child is not expected to be that of its father, and his condition does not necessarily affect that of the child. He may be the slave of Mr. Tilgman; and his child, when born, may be the slave of Mr. Gross. He may be a *freeman*; and yet his child may be a *chattel*. He may be white, glorying in the purity of his Anglo-Saxon blood; and his child may be ranked with the blackest slaves. Indeed, he *may* be, and often *is*, master and father to the same child. He can be father without being a husband, and may sell his child without incurring reproach, if the child be by a woman in whose veins courses one thirty-second part of African blood. My father was a white man, or nearly white. It was sometimes whispered that my master was my father.

...[T]he fact remains, in all its glaring odiousness, that, by the laws of slavery, children, in all cases, are reduced to the condition of their mothers. This arrange-

ment admits of the greatest license to brutal slaveholders, and their profligate sons, brothers, relations and friends, and gives to the pleasure of sin, the additional attraction of profit. A whole volume might be written on this single feature of slavery, as I have observed it. One might imagine, that the children of such connections, would fare better, in the hands of their masters, than other slaves.

The rule is quite the other way; and a very little reflection will satisfy the reader that such is the case. A man who will enslave his own blood, may not be safely relied on for magnanimity. Men do not love those who remind them of their sins unless they have a mind to repent—and the mulatto child's face is a standing accusation against him who is master and father to the child. What is still worse, perhaps, such a child is a constant offense to the wife. She hates its very presence, and when a slaveholding woman hates, she wants not means to give that hate telling effect. Women—white women, I mean—are IDOLS at the south, not WIVES, for the slave women are preferred in many instances; and if these *idols* but nod, or lift a finger, woe to the poor victim: kicks, cuffs and stripes are sure to follow.

Masters are frequently compelled to sell this class of their slaves, out of deference to the feelings of their white wives; and shocking and scandalous as it may seem for a man to sell his own blood to the traffickers in human flesh, it is often an act of humanity toward the slave-child to be thus removed from his merciless tormentors....

I may remark, that, if the lineal descendants of Ham are only to be enslaved, according to the scriptures, slavery in this country will soon become an unscriptural institution; for thousands are ushered into the world, annually, who—like myself—owe their existence to white fathers, and, most frequently, to their masters, and master's sons. The slave-woman is at the mercy of the fathers, sons or brothers of her master.

The thoughtful know the rest.

...The slaveholder, as well as the slave, is the victim of the slave system. A man's character greatly takes its hue and shape from the form and color of things about him. Under the whole heavens there is no relation more unfavorable to the development of honorable character, than that sustained by the slaveholder to the slave. Reason is imprisoned here, and passions run wild. Like the fires of the prairie, once lighted, they are at the mercy of every wind, and must burn, till they have consumed all that is combustible within their remorseless grasp. Capt. Anthony could be kind, and, at times, he even showed an affectionate disposition. Could the reader have seen him gently leading me by the hand—as he sometimes did—patting me on the head, speaking to me in soft, caressing tones and calling me his “little Indian boy,” he would have deemed him a kind old

man, and really, almost fatherly. But the pleasant moods of a slaveholder are remarkably brittle; they are easily snapped; they neither come often, nor remain long. His temper is subjected to perpetual trials; but, since these trials are never borne patiently, they add nothing to his natural stock of patience.

Old master very early impressed me with the idea that he was an unhappy man. Even to my child's eye, he wore a troubled, and at times, a haggard aspect. His strange movements excited my curiosity, and awakened my compassion. He seldom walked alone without muttering to himself; and he occasionally stormed about, as if defying an army of invisible foes. "He would do this, that, and the other; he'd be d—d if he did not,"—was the usual form of his threats. Most of his leisure was spent in walking, cursing and gesticulating, like one possessed by a demon. Most evidently, he was a wretched man, at war with his own soul, and with all the world around him. To be overheard by the children, disturbed him very little. He made no more of our presence, than of that of the ducks and geese which he met on the green. He little thought that the little black urchins around him, could see, through those vocal crevices, the very secrets of his heart. Slaveholders ever underrate the intelligence with which they have to grapple. I really understood the old man's mutterings, attitudes and gestures, about as well as he did himself. But slaveholders never encourage that kind of communication, with the slaves, by which they might learn to measure the depths of his knowledge.

Ignorance is a high virtue in a human chattel; and as the master studies to keep the slave ignorant, the slave is cunning enough to make the master think he succeeds. The slave fully appreciates the saying, "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise." When old master's gestures were violent, ending with a threatening shake of the head, and a sharp snap of his middle finger and thumb, I deemed it wise to keep at a respectable distance from him; for, at such times, trifling faults stood, in his eyes, as momentous offenses; and, having both the power and the disposition, the victim had only to be near him to catch the punishment, deserved or undeserved.

One of the first circumstances that opened my eyes to the cruelty and wickedness of slavery, and the heartlessness of my old master, was the refusal of the latter to interpose his authority, to protect and shield a young woman, who had been most cruelly abused and beaten by his overseer in Tuckahoe. This overseer—a Mr. Plummer—was a man like most of his class, little better than a human brute; and, in addition to his general profligacy and repulsive coarseness, the creature was a miserable drunkard. He was, probably, employed by my old master, less on account of the excellence of his services, than for the cheap rate at which they could be

obtained. He was not fit to have the management of a drove of mules. In a fit of drunken madness, he committed the outrage which brought the young woman in question down to my old master's for protection.

This young woman was the daughter of Milly, an own aunt of mine. The poor girl, on arriving at our house, presented a pitiable appearance. She had left in haste, and without preparation; and, probably, without the knowledge of Mr. Plummer. She had traveled twelve miles, bare-footed, bare-necked and bare-headed. Her neck and shoulders were covered with scars, newly made; and not content with marring her neck and shoulders, with the cowhide, the cowardly brute had dealt her a blow on the head with a hickory club, which cut a horrible gash, and left her face literally covered with blood. In this condition, the poor young woman came down, to implore protection at the hands of my old master. I expected to see him boil over with rage at the revolting deed, and to hear him fill the air with curses upon the brutal Plummer; but I was disappointed. He sternly told her, in an angry tone, he "believed she deserved every bit of it," and, if she did not go home instantly, he would himself take the remaining skin from her neck and back. Thus was the poor girl compelled to return, without redress, and perhaps to receive an additional flogging for daring to appeal to old master against the overseer.

Old master seemed furious at the thought of being troubled by such complaints. I did not, at that time, understand the philosophy of his treatment of my cousin. It was stern, unnatural, violent. Had the man no bowels of compassion? Was he dead to all sense of humanity? No. I think I now understand it. This treatment is a part of the system, rather than a part of the man. Were slaveholders to listen to complaints of this sort against the overseers, the luxury of owning large numbers of slaves, would be impossible. It would do away with the office of overseer, entirely; or, in other words, it would convert the master himself into an overseer. It would occasion great loss of time and labor, leaving the overseer in fetters, and without the necessary power to secure obedience to his orders. A privilege so dangerous as that of appeal, is, therefore, strictly prohibited; and any one exercising it, runs a fearful hazard.

...Esther...was a young woman who possessed that which is ever a curse to the slave-girl; namely,—personal beauty. She was tall, well formed, and made a fine appearance. The daughters of Col. Lloyd could scarcely surpass her in personal charms. Esther was courted by Ned Roberts, and he was as fine looking a young man, as she was a woman. He was the son of a favorite slave of Col. Lloyd. Some slaveholders would have been glad to promote the marriage of two such persons; but, for some reason or other, my old master took it upon him to break up the growing intimacy between Esther and



Edward. He strictly ordered her to quit the company of said Roberts, telling her that he would punish her severely if he ever found her again in Edward's company. This unnatural and heartless order was, of course, broken. A woman's love is not to be annihilated by the peremptory command of any one, whose breath is in his nostrils. It was impossible to keep Edward and Esther apart. Meet they would, and meet they did.

Had old master been a man of honor and purity, his motives, in this matter, might have been viewed more favorably. As it was, his motives were as abhorrent, as his methods were foolish and contemptible. It was too evident that he was not concerned for the girl's welfare. It is one of the damning characteristics of the slave system, that it robs its victims of every earthly incentive to a holy life. The fear of God, and the hope of heaven, are found sufficient to sustain many slave-women, amidst the snares and dangers of their strange lot; but, this side of God and heaven, a slave-woman is at the mercy of the power, caprice and passion of her owner. Slavery provides no means for the honorable continuance of the race. Marriage as imposing obligations on the parties to it—has no existence here, except in such hearts as are purer and higher than the standard morality around them. It is one of the consolations of my life, that I know of many honorable instances of persons who maintained their honor, where all around was corrupt.

Esther was evidently much attached to Edward, and abhorred—as she had reason to do—the tyrannical and base behavior of old master. Edward was young, and fine looking, and he loved and courted her. He might have been her husband, in the high sense just alluded to; but WHO and *what* was this old master? His attentions were plainly brutal and selfish, and it was as natural that Esther should loathe him, as that she should love Edward.

Abhorred and circumvented as he was, old master, having the power, very easily took revenge. I happened to see this exhibition of his rage and cruelty toward Esther. The time selected was singular. It was early in the morning, when all besides was still, and before any of the family, in the house or kitchen, had left their beds. I saw but few of the shocking preliminaries, for the cruel work had begun before I awoke. I was probably awakened by the shrieks and piteous cries of poor Esther. My sleeping place was on the floor of a little, rough closet, which opened into the kitchen; and through the cracks of its unplanned boards, I could distinctly see and hear what was going on, without being seen by old master.

Esther's wrists were firmly tied, and the twisted rope was fastened to a strong staple in a heavy wooden joist above, near the fireplace. Here she stood, on a bench, her arms tightly drawn over her breast. Her back and shoulders were bare to the waist. Behind her stood old

master, with cowskin in hand, preparing his barbarous work with all manner of harsh, coarse, and tantalizing epithets. The screams of his victim were most piercing. He was cruelly deliberate, and protracted the torture, as one who was delighted with the scene. Again and again he drew the hateful whip through his hand, adjusting it with a view of dealing the most pain-giving blow. Poor Esther had never yet been severely whipped, and her shoulders were plump and tender. Each blow, vigorously laid on, brought screams as well as blood. "*Have mercy; Oh! have mercy*" she cried; "*I won't do so no more;*" but her piercing cries seemed only to increase his fury. His answers to them are too coarse and blasphemous to be produced here.

The whole scene, with all its attendants, was revolting and shocking, to the last degree; and when the motives of this brutal castigation are considered,—language has no power to convey a just sense of its awful criminality. After laying on some thirty or forty stripes, old master untied his suffering victim, and let her get down. She could scarcely stand, when untied. From my heart I pitied her, and—child though I was—the outrage kindled in me a feeling far from peaceful; but I was hushed, terrified, stunned, and could do nothing, and the fate of Esther might be mine next. The scene here described was often repeated in the case of poor Esther, and her life, as I knew it, was one of wretchedness.

...It is the boast of slaveholders, that their slaves enjoy more of the physical comforts of life than the peasantry of any country in the world. My experience contradicts this. The men and the women slaves on Col. Lloyd's farm, received, as their monthly allowance of food, eight pounds of pickled pork, or their equivalent in fish. The pork was often tainted, and the fish was of the poorest quality—herrings, which would bring very little if offered for sale in any northern market. With their pork or fish, they had one bushel of Indian meal—unbolted—of which quite fifteen per cent was fit only to feed pigs. With this, one pint of salt was given; and this was the entire monthly allowance of a full grown slave, working constantly in the open field, from morning until night, every day in the month except Sunday, and living on a fraction more than a quarter of a pound of meat per day, and less than a peck of corn-meal per week. There is no kind of work that a man can do which requires a better supply of food to prevent physical exhaustion, than the field-work of a slave. So much for the slave's allowance of food; now for his raiment. The yearly allowance of clothing for the slaves on this plantation, consisted of two tow-linen shirts—such linen as the coarsest crash towels are made of; one pair of trowsers of the same material, for summer, and a pair of trowsers and a jacket of woollen, most lazily put together, for winter; one pair of yarn stockings, and one

pair of shoes of the coarsest description. The slave's entire apparel could not have cost more than eight dollars per year.

The allowance of food and clothing for the little children, was committed to their mothers, or to the older slavewomen having the care of them. Children who were unable to work in the field, had neither shoes, stockings, jackets nor trowsers given them. Their clothing consisted of two coarse tow-linen shirts—already described—per year; and when these failed them, as they often did, they went naked until the next allowance day. Flocks of little children from five to ten years old, might be seen on Col. Lloyd's plantation, as destitute of clothing as any little heathen on the west coast of Africa; and this, not merely during the summer months, but during the frosty weather of March. The little girls were no better off than the boys; all were nearly in a state of nudity.

As to beds to sleep on, they were known to none of the field hands; nothing but a coarse blanket—not so good as those used in the north to cover horses—was given them, and this only to the men and women. The children stuck themselves in holes and corners, about the quarters; often in the corner of the huge chimneys, with their feet in the ashes to keep them warm. The want of beds, however, was not considered a very great privation. Time to sleep was of far greater importance, for, when the day's work is done, most of the slaves have their washing, mending and cooking to do; and, having few or none of the ordinary facilities for doing such things, very many of their sleeping hours are consumed in necessary preparations for the duties of the coming day.

The sleeping apartments—if they may be called such—have little regard to comfort or decency. Old and young, male and female, married and single, drop down upon the common clay floor, each covering up with his or her blanket,—the only protection they have from cold or exposure. The night, however, is shortened at both ends. The slaves work often as long as they can see, and are late in cooking and mending for the coming day; and, at the first gray streak of morning, they are summoned to the field by the driver's horn.

More slaves are whipped for oversleeping than for any other fault. Neither age nor sex finds any favor. The overseer stands at the quarter door, armed with stick and cowskin, ready to whip any who may be a few minutes behind time. When the horn is blown, there is a rush for the door, and the hindermost one is sure to get a blow from the overseer. Young mothers who worked in the field, were allowed an hour, about ten o'clock in the morning, to go home to nurse their children. Sometimes they were compelled to take their children with them, and to leave them in the corner of the fences, to prevent loss of time in nursing them. The overseer generally rides about the field on horseback.

A cowskin and a hickory stick are his constant companions. The cowskin is a kind of whip seldom seen in the northern states. It is made entirely of untanned, but dried, ox hide, and is about as hard as a piece of well-seasoned live oak. It is made of various sizes, but the usual length is about three feet. The part held in the hand is nearly an inch in thickness; and, from the extreme end of the butt or handle, the cowskin tapers its whole length to a point. This makes it quite elastic and springy. A blow with it, on the hardest back, will gash the flesh, and make the blood start. Cowskins are painted red, blue and green, and are the favorite slave whip. I think this whip worse than the "cat-o'-nine-tails." It condenses the whole strength of the arm to a single point, and comes with a spring that makes the air whistle. It is a terrible instrument, and is so handy, that the overseer can always have it on his person, and ready for use. The temptation to use it is ever strong; and an overseer can, if disposed, always have cause for using it. With him, it is literally a word and a blow, and, in most cases, the blow comes first.

...[All day] the human cattle are in motion, wielding their clumsy hoes; hurried on by no hope of reward, no sense of gratitude, no love of children, no prospect of bettering their condition; nothing, save the dread and terror of the slave-driver's lash. So goes one day, and so comes and goes another.

But, let us now leave the rough usage of the field, where vulgar coarseness and brutal cruelty spread themselves and flourish, rank as weeds in the tropics; where a vile wretch, in the shape of a man, rides, walks, or struts about, dealing blows, and leaving gashes on broken-spirited men and helpless women, for thirty dollars per month—a business so horrible, hardening and disgraceful, that, rather, than engage in it, a decent man would blow his own brains out—and let the reader view with me the equally wicked, but less repulsive aspects of slave life; where pride and pomp roll luxuriously at ease; where the toil of a thousand men supports a single family in easy idleness and sin. This is the great house; it is the home of the LLOYDS! Some idea of its splendor has already been given—and, it is here that we shall find that height of luxury which is the opposite of that depth of poverty and physical wretchedness that we have just now been contemplating. But, there is this difference in the two extremes; viz: that in the case of the slave, the miseries and hardships of his lot are imposed by others, and, in the master's case, they are imposed by himself. The slave is a subject, subjected by others; the slaveholder is a subject, but he is the author of his own subjection. There is more truth in the saying, that slavery is a greater evil to the master than to the slave, than many, who utter it, suppose. The self-executing laws of eternal justice follow close on the heels of the evil-doer here, as well as elsewhere; making escape from all its penalties impossible.



...I never shall forget the ecstasy with which I received the intelligence from my friend, Miss Lucretia, that my old master had determined to let me go to Baltimore to live with Mr. Hugh Auld, a brother to Mr. Thomas Auld, my old master's son-in-law. I received this information about three days before my departure. They were three of the happiest days of my childhood. I spent the largest part of these three days in the creek, washing off the plantation scurf, and preparing for my new home.

...Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Auld, my new mistress and master, were both at home, and met me at the door with their rosy cheeked little son, Thomas, to take care of whom was to constitute my future occupation.

In fact, it was to "little Tommy," rather than to his parents, that old master made a present of me; and though there was no *legal* form or arrangement entered into, I have no doubt that Mr. and Mrs. Auld felt that, in due time, I should be the legal property of their bright-eyed and beloved boy, Tommy. I was struck with the appearance, especially, of my new mistress. Her face was lighted with the kindest emotions; and the reflex influence of her countenance, as well as the tenderness with which she seemed to regard me, while asking me sundry little questions, greatly delighted me, and lit up, to my fancy, the pathway of my future.

...I had been treated as a *pig* on the plantation; I was treated as a *child* now.... I therefore soon learned to regard her as something more akin to a mother, than a slaveholding mistress.

The crouching servility of a slave, usually so acceptable a quality to the haughty slaveholder, was not understood nor desired by this gentle woman. So far from deeming it impudent in a slave to look her straight in the face, as some slaveholding ladies do, she seemed ever to say, "look up, child; don't be afraid; see, I am full of kindness and good will toward you." The hands belonging to Col. Lloyd's sloop, esteemed it a great privilege to be the bearers of parcels or messages to my new mistress; for whenever they came, they were sure of a most kind and pleasant reception.

If little Thomas was her son, and her most dearly beloved child, she, for a time, at least, made me something like his half-brother in her affections. If dear Tommy was exalted to a place on his mother's knee, "Freddy" was honored by a place at his mother's side. Nor did he lack the caressing strokes of her gentle hand, to convince him that, though *motherless*, he was not *friendless*. Mrs. Auld was not only a kind-hearted woman, but she was remarkably pious; frequent in her attendance of public worship, much given to reading the bible, and to chanting hymns of praise, when alone.

Mr. Hugh Auld was altogether a different character. He cared very little about religion, knew more of the world, and was more of the world, than his wife. He set out, doubtless to be—as the world goes—a respectable

man, and to get on by becoming a successful ship builder, in that city of ship building. This was his ambition, and it fully occupied him. I was, of course, of very little consequence to him, compared with what I was to good Mrs. Auld; and, when he smiled upon me, as he sometimes did, the smile was borrowed from his lovely wife, and, like all borrowed light, was transient, and vanished with the source whence it was derived. While I must characterize Master Hugh as being a very sour man, and of forbidding appearance, it is due to him to acknowledge, that he was never very cruel to me, according to the notion of cruelty in Maryland. The first year or two which I spent in his house, he left me almost exclusively to the management of his wife. She was my law-giver.

In hands so tender as hers, and in the absence of the cruelties of the plantation, I became, both physically and mentally, much more sensitive to good and ill treatment; and, perhaps, suffered more from a frown from my mistress, than I formerly did from a cuff at the hands of Aunt Katy. Instead of the cold, damp floor of my old master's kitchen, I found myself on carpets; for the corn bag in winter, I now had a good straw bed, well furnished with covers; for the coarse corn-meal in the morning, I now had good bread, and mush occasionally; for my poor tow-linen shirt, reaching to my knees, I had good, clean clothes. I was really well off.

My employment was to run errands, and to take care of Tommy; to prevent his getting in the way of carriages, and to keep him out of harm's way generally. Tommy, and I, and his mother, got on swimmingly together, for a time. I *say for a time*, because the fatal poison of irresponsible power, and the natural influence of slavery customs, were not long in making a suitable impression on the gentle and loving disposition of my excellent mistress. At first, Mrs. Auld evidently regarded me simply as a child, like any other child; she had not come to regard me as *property*. This latter thought was a thing of conventional growth. The first was natural and spontaneous. A noble nature, like hers, could not, instantly, be wholly perverted; and it took several years to change the natural sweetness of her temper into fretful bitterness. In her worst estate, however, there were, during the first seven years I lived with her, occasional returns of her former kindly disposition.

The frequent hearing of my mistress reading the bible, for she often read aloud when her husband was absent, soon awakened my curiosity in respect to this *mystery* of reading, and roused in me the desire to learn. Having no fear of my kind mistress before my eyes, (she had then given me no reason to fear) I frankly asked her to teach me to read; and, without hesitation, the dear woman began the task, and very soon, by her assistance, I was master of the alphabet, and could spell words of three or four letters. My mistress seemed almost as proud of my progress, as if I had been her own

child; and, supposing that her husband would be as well pleased, she made no secret of what she was doing for me. Indeed, she exultingly told him of the aptness of her pupil, of her intention to persevere in teaching me, and of the duty which she felt it to teach me, at least to read *the bible*. Here arose the first cloud over my Baltimore prospects, the precursor of drenching rains and chilling blasts.

Master Hugh was amazed at the simplicity of his spouse, and, probably for the first time, he unfolded to her the true philosophy of slavery, and the peculiar rules necessary to be observed by masters and mistresses, in the management of their human chattels. Mr. Auld promptly forbade continuance of her instruction; telling her, in the first place, that the thing itself was unlawful; that it was also unsafe, and could only lead to mischief. To use his own words, further, he said, "if you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell;" "he should know nothing but the will of his master, and learn to obey it." "If you teach that nigger—speaking of myself—how to read the bible, there will be no keeping him;" "it would forever unfit him for the duties of a slave;" and "as to himself, learning would do him no good, but probably, a great deal of harm—making him disconsolate and unhappy." "If you learn him now to read, he'll want to know how to write; and, this accomplished, he'll be running away with himself."

Such was the tenor of Master Hugh's oracular exposition of the true philosophy of training a human chattel; and it must be confessed that he very clearly comprehended the nature and the requirements of the relation of master and slave. His discourse was the first decidedly anti-slavery lecture to which it had been my lot to listen. Mrs. Auld evidently felt the force of his re-

marks; and, like an obedient wife, began to shape her course in the direction indicated by her husband.

The effect of his words, *on me*, was neither slight nor transitory. His iron sentences—cold and harsh—sunk deep into my heart, and stirred up not only my feelings into a sort of rebellion, but awakened within me a slumbering train of vital thought. It was a new and special revelation, dispelling a painful mystery, against which my youthful understanding had struggled, and struggled in vain, to wit: the *white* man's power to perpetuate the enslavement of the *black* man. "Very well," thought I; "knowledge unfits a child to be a slave." I instinctively assented to the proposition; and from that moment I understood the direct pathway from slavery to freedom. This was just what I needed; and I got it at a time, and from a source, whence I least expected it. I was saddened at the thought of losing the assistance of my kind mistress; but the information, so instantly derived, to some extent compensated me for the loss I had sustained in this direction.

Wise as Mr. Auld was, he evidently underrated my comprehension, and had little idea of the use to which I was capable of putting the impressive lesson he was giving to his wife. *He* wanted me to be a *slave*; I had already voted against that on the home plantation of Col. Lloyd. That which he most loved I most hated; and the very determination which he expressed to keep me in ignorance, only rendered me the more resolute in seeking intelligence. In learning to read, therefore, I am not sure that I do not owe quite as much to the opposition of my master, as to the kindly assistance of my amiable mistress. I acknowledge the benefit rendered me by the one, and by the other; believing, that but for my mistress, I might have grown up in ignorance.

## 20

# Rules on a Rice Plantation (1856)

P . C . W E S T O N

In 1856, P. C. Weston circulated the following rules for his South Carolina plantation. In January of the following year, *De Bow's Review*, the leading Southern



journal, published these rules as a model for other plantations that relied on individual task work, rather than the more common gang system.

### Questions to Consider

- Why would *De Bow's* find these rules exemplary?
- What image of his relations with his slaves is Weston trying to create?
- Why was no slave allowed to keep a boat?

The Proprietor, in the first place, wishes the Overseer most distinctly to understand that his first object is to be, under all circumstances, the care and well being of the negroes. The Proprietor is always ready to excuse such errors as may proceed from want of judgment; but he never can or will excuse any cruelty, severity, or want of care towards the negroes. For the well being, however, of the negroes, it is absolutely necessary to maintain obedience, order, and discipline; to see that the tasks are punctually and carefully performed, and to conduct the business steadily and firmly, without weakness on the one hand, or harshness on the other. For such ends the following regulations have been instituted.

*Lists—Tickets.*—The names of all the men are to be called over every Sunday morning and evening, from which none are to be absent but those who are sick, or have tickets. When there is evening Church, those who attend are to be excused from answering. At evening list, every negro must be clean and well washed. No one is to be absent from the place without a ticket, which is always to be given to such as ask it, and have behaved well. All persons coming from the Proprietor's other places should show their tickets to the Overseer, who should sign his name on the back; those going off the plantation should bring back their tickets signed. The Overseer is every now and then to go round at night and call at the houses, so as to ascertain whether their inmates are at home.

*Allowance—Food.*—Great care should be taken that the negroes should never have less than their regular allowance: in all cases of doubt, it should be given in favor of the largest quantity. The measures should not be struck, but rather heaped up over. None but provisions of the best quality should be used. If any is discovered to be damaged, the Proprietor, if at hand, is to be immediately informed; if absent, the damaged article is to be destroyed. The corn should be carefully winnowed before grinding. The small rice is apt to become

sour: as soon as this is perceived it should be given out every meal until finished, or until it becomes too sour to use, when it should be destroyed.

*Work, Holidays, &c.*—No work of any sort or kind is to be permitted to be done by negroes on Good Friday, or Christmas day, or on any Sunday, except going for a Doctor, or nursing sick persons; any work of this kind done on any of these days is to be reported to the Proprietor, who will pay for it. The two days following Christmas day; the first Saturdays after finishing threshing, planting, hoeing, and harvest, are also to be holidays, on which the people may work for themselves. Only half task is to be done on every Saturday, except during planting and harvest, and those who have misbehaved or been lying up during the week. A task is as much work as the meanest full hand can do in nine hours, working industriously. The Driver is each morning to point out to each hand their task, and this task is never to be increased, and no work is to be done over task except under the most urgent necessity; which over-work is to be reported to the Proprietor, who will pay for it. No negro is to be put into a task which they cannot finish with tolerable ease. It is a bad plan to punish for not finishing task; it is subversive of discipline to leave tasks unfinished, and contrary to justice to punish for what cannot be done. In nothing does a good manager so much excel a bad, as in being able to discern what a hand is capable of doing, and in never attempting to make him do more.

No negro is to leave his task until the driver has examined and approved it, he is then to be permitted immediately to go home; and the hands are to be encouraged to finish their tasks as early as possible, so as to have time for working for themselves. Every negro, except the sickly ones and those with suckling children, (who are to be allowed half an hour) are to be on board the flat by sunrise.<sup>1</sup> One driver is to go down to the flat early, the other to remain behind and bring on

<sup>1</sup> Flats are the boats or rafts which took the slaves through the waterways to their work.

all the people with him. He will be responsible for all coming down. The barn-yard bell will be rung by the watchman two hours, and half an hour, before sunrise.

*Punishments.*—It is desirable to allow 24 hours to elapse between the discovery of the offense, and the punishment. No punishment is to exceed 15 lashes: in cases where the Overseer supposes a severer punishment necessary, he must apply to the Proprietor.... Confinement (not in the stocks) is to be preferred to whipping; but the stoppage of Saturday's allowance, and doing whole task on Saturday, will suffice to prevent ordinary offenses. Special care must be taken to prevent any indecency in punishing women. No Driver, or other negro, is to be allowed to punish any person in any way, except by order of the Overseer, and in his presence.

*Flats, Boats, &c.* —All the flats, except those in immediate use, should be kept under cover, and sheltered from the sun. Every boat must be locked up every evening and the keys taken to the Overseer. No negro will be allowed to keep a boat.

*Sickness.*—All sick persons are to stay in the hospital night and day, from the time they first complain to the time they are able to go to work again. The nurses are to be responsible for the sick not leaving the house, and for the cleanliness of the bedding, utensils, &c. The nurses are never to be allowed to give any medicine without the orders of the Overseer or Doctor. A woman, beside the plantation nurse, must be put to nurse all persons seriously ill. In all cases at all serious the Doctor is to be sent for, and his orders are to be strictly attended to; no alteration is to be made in the treatment he directs. Lying-in women are to be attended by the midwife as long as is necessary, and by a woman put to nurse them for a fortnight. They will remain at the negro houses for 4 weeks, and then will work 2 weeks on the highland.... The health of many women has been entirely ruined by want of care in this particular. Women are sometimes in such a state as to render it unfit for them to work in water; the Overseer should take care of them at these times. The pregnant women are always to do some work up to the time of their confinement, if it is only walking into the field and staying there....

Nourishing food is to be provided for those who are getting better. The Overseer will keep an account of the articles he purchases for this purpose, during the Proprietor's absence, which he will settle for as soon as he returns.

*Bleeding is under all circumstances strictly prohibited, except by order of the Doctor.*—The Overseer is particularly warned not to give strong medicine, such as calomel, or tartar emetic; simple remedies such as flax-seed tea,

mintwater,...&c., are sufficient for most cases, and do less harm. Strong medicines should be left to the Doctor; and since the Proprietor never grudges a Doctor's bill, however large, he has a right to expect that the Overseer shall always send for the Doctor when a serious case occurs.... Great care must be taken to prevent persons from lying up when there is nothing or little the matter with them. Such must be turned out immediately; and those somewhat sick can do lighter work, which encourages industry. Nothing is so subversive of discipline, or so unjust, as to allow people to sham, for this causes the well-disposed to do the work of the lazy.

*Duties of Officials.*—Drivers are, under the Overseer, to maintain discipline and order on the place. They are to be responsible for the quiet of the negro-houses, for the proper performance of tasks, for bringing out the people early in the morning, and generally for the immediate inspection of such things as the Overseer only generally superintends....

*Watchmen* are to be responsible for the safety of the buildings, boats, flats, and fences, and that no cattle or hogs come inside the place. If he perceives any buildings or fences out of repair, or if he hears of any robberies or trespasses, he must immediately give the Overseer notice. He must help to kill hogs and beeves.

*Trunk-minders* undertake the whole care of the trunks,<sup>2</sup> under the Proprietor's and Overseer's directions. Each has a boat to himself, which he must on no account let any body else use....

*Cooks* take every day the provisions for all the people.... The Overseer is particularly requested to see that they cook cleanly and well.. One cook cooks on the Island, the other on the Main, for the carpenters, millers, highland hands, &c.

The child's cook cooks for the children at the negro-houses; she ought to be particularly looked after, so that the children should not eat anything unwholesome.

*Miscellaneous Observations.*—The Proprietor wishes particularly to impress on the Overseer the criterion by which he will judge of his usefulness and capacity. *First*—by the general well-being of all the negroes; their cleanly appearance, respectful manners, active and vigorous obedience; their completion of their tasks well and early; the small amount of punishment; the excess of births over deaths; the small number of persons in hospital, and the health of the children. *Secondly*—the condition and fatness of the cattle and mules; the good

<sup>2</sup> Trunks are the sluice-valves that control the flow of water in the fields.



repair of all the fences and buildings, harness, boats, flats, and ploughs; more particularly the good order of the banks and trunks, and the freedom of the fields from grass and volunteer [weeds]. *Thirdly*—the amount and quality of the rice and provision crops. The Overseer will fill up the printed forms sent to him every week, from which the Proprietor will obtain most of the facts he desires, to form the estimate mentioned above.

The Overseer is expressly prohibited from three things viz: bleeding, giving spirits to any negro without a Doctor's order, and letting any negro on the place have or keep any gun, powder, or shot.

Women with six children alive at any *one* time, are allowed all Saturday to themselves.

Fighting, particularly amongst women, and obscene, or abusive language, is to be always rigorously punished.

During the summer, fresh spring water must be carried every day on the Island. Any body found drinking ditch or river water must be punished.

*Finally*.—The Proprietor hopes the Overseer will remember that a system of strict justice is necessary to good management. No person should ever be allowed to break a law without being punished, or any person punished who has not broken a well known law. Every person should be made perfectly to understand what they are punished for, and should be made to perceive that they are not punished in anger, or through caprice. All abusive language or violence of demeanor should be avoided: they reduce the man who uses them to a level with the negro, and are hardly ever forgotten by those to whom they are addressed.

## 21

# *The Dred Scott Decision* (1857)

U . S . S U P R E M E C O U R T

*Dred Scott v. Sandford* is probably the most notorious decision by the U.S. Supreme Court. Chief Justice Taney sought to resolve the question of the Constitutional contradiction between slavery and freedom, property and personal rights, once and for all. He did not succeed. As with Justice Marshall in the *Marbury* decision, Taney denied that his court had jurisdiction, for slaves could not sue in federal courts, and delivered a judgment on the merits of the case anyway. Taney not only decreed that African Americans had never been and could not be citizens of the United States, but he also overturned the Missouri Compromise, which had limited slavery to the southern portion of the country. The new Republican Party quickly seized on the case as a warning to the nation that slavery was on the verge of being nationalized.

### Questions to Consider

- Is Taney historically correct in his insistence that African Americans had never been citizens?
- Were Republican leaders, such as Abraham Lincoln, correct in warning that Taney's logic, and slavery, would be extended westward, and even northward?

### Mr. Chief Justice Taney delivered the opinion of the court....

The question is simply this: Can a negro, whose ancestors were imported into this country, and sold as slaves, become a member of the political community formed and brought into existence by the Constitution of the United States, and as such become entitled to all the rights, and privileges, and immunities, guaranteed by that instrument to the citizen? One of which rights is the privilege of suing in a court of the United States in the cases specified in the Constitution....

We think they are not, and that they are not included, and were not intended to be included, under the word "citizens" in the Constitution, and can therefore claim none of the rights and privileges which that instrument provides for and secures to citizens of the United States. On the contrary, they were at that time considered as a subordinate and inferior class of beings, who had been subjugated by the dominant race, and, whether emancipated or not, yet remained subject to their authority, and had no rights or privileges but such as those who held the power and the Government might choose to grant them.

It is not the province of the court to decide upon the justice or injustice, the policy or impolicy, of these laws. The decision of that question belonged to the political or law-making power; to those who formed the sovereignty and framed the Constitution. The duty of the court is, to interpret the instrument they have framed, with the best lights we can obtain on the subject, and to administer it as we find it, according to its true intent and meaning when it was adopted.

In discussing this question, we must not confound the rights of citizenship which a State may confer within its own limits, and the rights of citizenship as a member of the Union. It does not by any means follow, because he has all the rights and privileges of a citizen of a State, that he must be a citizen of the United States.

He may have all of the rights and privileges of the citizen of a State, and yet not be entitled to the rights and privileges of a citizen in any other State....

It is very clear, therefore, that no State can, by any act or law of its own, passed since the adoption of the Constitution, introduce a new member into the political community created by the Constitution of the United States. It cannot make him a member of this community by making him a member of its own. And for the same reason it cannot introduce any person, or description of persons, who were not intended to be embraced in this new political family, which the Constitution brought into existence, but were intended to be excluded from it.

The question then arises, whether the provisions of the Constitution, in relation to the personal rights and privileges to which the citizen of a State should be entitled, embraced the negro African race, at that time in this country, or who might afterwards be imported, who had then or should afterwards be made free in any State; and to put it in the power of a single State to make him a citizen of the United States, and embue him with the full rights of citizenship in every other State without their consent?...

The court thinks the affirmative of these propositions cannot be maintained. And if it cannot, the plaintiff in error could not be a citizen of the State of Missouri, within the meaning of the Constitution of the United States, and, consequently was not entitled to sue in its courts.

It is true, every person, and every class and description of persons, who were at the time of the adoption of the Constitution recognised as citizens in the several States, became also citizens of this new political body; but none other; it was formed by them, and for them and their posterity, but for no one else....

It becomes necessary, therefore, to determine who were citizens of the several States when the Constitution was adopted....

In the opinion of the court, the legislation and histories of the times, and the language used in the Declaration of Independence, show, that neither the class of persons who had been imported as slaves, nor their descendants, whether they had become free or not, were then acknowledged as a part of the people, nor in-

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Source: 19 Howard 393 (1857); Benjamin C. Howard, reporter, *U.S. Reports* (Washington, D.C., 1857), 60: pp. 403–407, 409–412, 416–417, 426–427, 430–432, 447–448, 450–452.



tended to be included in the general words used in that memorable instrument....

The language of the Declaration of Independence is equally conclusive: "...We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among them is life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, Governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

The general words above quoted would seem to embrace the whole human family, and if they were used in a similar instrument at this day would be so understood. But it is too clear for dispute, that the enslaved African race were not intended to be included, and formed no part of the people who framed and adopted this declaration; for if the language, as understood in that day, would embrace them, the conduct of the distinguished men who framed the Declaration of Independence would have been utterly and flagrantly inconsistent with the principles they asserted; and instead of the sympathy of mankind, to which they so confidently appealed, they would have deserved and received universal rebuke and reprobation.

Yet the men who framed this declaration were great men—high in literary acquirements—high in their sense of honor, and incapable of asserting principles inconsistent with those on which they were acting. They perfectly understood the meaning of the language they used, and how it would be understood by others; and they knew that it would not in any part of the civilized world be supposed to embrace the negro race, which, by common consent, had been excluded from civilized Governments and the family of nations, and doomed to slavery. They spoke and acted according to the then established doctrines and principles, and in the ordinary language of the day, and no one misunderstood them. The unhappy black race were separated from the white by indelible marks, and laws long before established, and were never thought of or spoken of except as property, and when the claims of the owner or the profit of the trader were supposed to need protection....

[T]here are two clauses in the Constitution which point directly and specifically to the negro race as a separate class of persons, and show clearly that they were not regarded as a portion of the people or citizens of the Government then formed.

One of these clauses reserves to each of the thirteen States the right to import slaves until the year 1808, if it thinks proper.... And by the other provision the States pledge themselves to each other to maintain the right of property of the master, by delivering up to him any slave who may have escaped from his service...By the first above-mentioned clause, therefore, the right to

purchase and hold this property is directly sanctioned and authorized for twenty years by the people who framed the Constitution. And by the second, they pledge themselves to maintain and uphold the right of the master in the manner specified, as long as the Government they then formed should endure. And these two provisions show, conclusively, that neither the description of persons therein referred to, nor their descendants, were embraced in any of the other provisions of the Constitution, for certainly these two clauses were not intended to confer on them or their posterity the blessings of liberty or any of the personal rights so carefully provided for the citizen.

No one of that race had ever migrated to the United States voluntarily; all of them had been brought here as articles of merchandise. The number that had been emancipated at that time were but few in comparison with those held in slavery; and they were identified in the public mind with the race to which they belonged, and regarded as a part of the slave population rather than the free. It is obvious that they were not even in the minds of the framers of the Constitution when they were conferring special rights and privileges upon the citizens of a State in every other part of the Union....

The legislation of the States therefore shows, in a manner not to be mistaken, the inferior and subject condition of that race at the time the Constitution was adopted,...and it is hardly consistent with the respect due to these States, to suppose that they regarded at that time, as fellow-citizens and members of the sovereignty, a class of beings whom they had thus stigmatized;...or, that when they met in convention to form the Constitution, they looked upon them as a portion of their constituents, or designed to include them in the provisions so carefully inserted for the security and protection of the liberties and rights of their citizens.... More especially, it cannot be believed that the large slaveholding States...would have consented to a Constitution which might compel them to receive them in that character from another State. For if they were so received, and entitled to the privileges and immunities of citizens, it would exempt them from the operation of the special laws and from the police regulations which they considered to be necessary for their own safety. It would give to persons of the negro race, who were recognized as citizens in any one State of the Union, the right to enter every other State whenever they pleased, singly or in companies, without pass or passport, and without obstruction, to sojourn there as long as they pleased, to go where they pleased at every hour of the day or night without molestation unless they committed some violation of law for which a white man would be punished; and it would give them the full liberty of speech in public and in private upon all subjects upon

which its own citizens might speak; to hold public meetings upon political affairs, and to keep and carry arms wherever they went. And all of this would be done in the face of the subject race of the same color, both free and slaves, and inevitably producing discontent and insubordination among them and endangering the peace and safety of the State....

We proceed, therefore, to inquire whether the facts relied on by the plaintiff entitled him to his freedom....

In considering this part of the controversy, two questions arise: 1. Was he, together with his family, free in Missouri by reason of the stay in the territory of the United States herein before mentioned? And 2. If they were not, is Scott himself free by reason of his removal to Rock Island, in the State of Illinois, as stated in the above admissions?...

The act of Congress, upon which the plaintiff relies, declares that slavery and involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime, shall be forever prohibited in all that part of the territory ceded by France, under the name of Louisiana, which lies north of thirty-six degrees thirty minutes north latitude, and not included within the limits of Missouri. And the difficulty which meets us at the threshold of this part of the inquiry is, whether Congress was authorized to pass this law under any of the powers granted to it by the Constitution; for if the authority is not given by that instrument, it is the duty of this court to declare it void and inoperative, and incapable of conferring freedom upon any one who is held as a slave under the laws of any one of the States.

The counsel for the plaintiff has laid much stress upon that article in the Constitution which confers on Congress the power "to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property belonging to the United States;" but, in the judgment of the court, that provision has no bearing on the present controversy, and the power there given, whatever it may be, is confined, and was intended to be confined, to the territory which at that time belonged to, or was claimed by, the United States, and was within their boundaries as settled by the treaty with Great Britain, and can have no influence upon a territory afterwards acquired from a foreign Government. It was a

special provision for a known and particular territory and to meet a present emergency, and nothing more....

Taking this rule to guide us, it may be safely assumed that citizens of the United States who migrate to a Territory belonging to the people of the United States, cannot be ruled as mere colonists, dependent upon the will of the General Government, and to be governed by any laws it may think proper to impose.... Whatever it acquires, it acquires for the benefit of the people of the several States who created it. It is their trustee acting for them, and charged with the duty of promoting the interests of the whole people of the Union in the exercise of the powers specifically granted....

Thus the rights of property are united with the rights of person, and placed on the same ground by the fifth amendment to the Constitution, which provides that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, and property, without due process of law. And an act of Congress which deprives a citizen of the United States of his liberty or property, merely because he came himself or brought his property into a particular Territory of the United States, and who had committed no offence against the laws, could hardly be dignified with the name of due process of law....

It seems, however, to be supposed, that there is a difference between property in a slave and other property, and that different rules may be applied to it in expounding the Constitution of the United States.... [I]f the Constitution recognises the right of property of the master in a slave, and makes no distinction between that description of property and other property owned by a citizen, no tribunal, acting under the authority of the United States,...has a right to draw such a distinction....

Upon these considerations, it is the opinion of the court that the act of Congress which prohibited a citizen from holding and owning property of this kind in the territory of the United States north of the line therein mentioned, is not warranted by the Constitution, and is therefore void; and that neither Dred Scott himself, nor any of his family, were made free by being carried into this territory; even if they had been carried there by the owner, with the intention of becoming a permanent resident.



# Cotton Is King (1858)

J A M E S H . H A M M O N D

On the level of personal conduct, it is difficult to discover a more vile individual in the antebellum Senate than James Hammond. Yet this former governor of South Carolina was one of the most effective advocates for the Southern position in the years just before the war. The following speech was delivered in the Senate on March 4, 1858, in support of the admission of Kansas as a slave state under the Lecompton Constitution. Kansas was divided in these years by the principle of popular sovereignty, which allowed the inhabitants of a territory to determine their government. Supporters and opponents of slavery poured into Kansas to determine its future. An entirely pro-slavery convention held at Lecompton in 1857 crafted a constitution that would make slavery perpetual in Kansas. Even the author of popular sovereignty, Stephen Douglas, was appalled, and the Democratic party was on the point of dissolution.

## Questions to Consider

- Is Hammond anticipating the Civil War?
- Is his self-confidence justified?
- What is a mudsill, and why does every society need one?

...As I am disposed to see this question settled as soon as possible, and am perfectly willing to have a final and conclusive settlement now,...I think it not improper that I should attempt to bring the North and South face to face, and see what resources each of us might have in the contingency of separate organizations.

If we never acquire another foot of territory for the South, look at her. Eight hundred and fifty thousand square miles. As large as Great Britain, France, Austria, Prussia and Spain. Is not that territory enough to make an empire that shall rule the world? With the finest soil, the most delightful climate, whose staple productions

none of those great countries can grow, we have three thousand miles of continental sea shore line so indented with bays and crowded with islands, that, when their shore lines are added, we have twelve thousand miles....

But, in this territory lies the great valley of the Mississippi, now the real, and soon to be the acknowledged seat of the empire of the world....

On this fine territory we have a population four times as large as that with which these colonies separated from the mother country, and a hundred, I might say a thousand fold stronger....Upon our muster-rolls we have a million of men. In a defensive war, upon an emergency, every one of them would be available. At any time, the South can raise, equip, and maintain in the field, a larger army than any Power of the earth can

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Source: *Selections from the Letters and Speeches of the Hon. James H. Hammond, of South Carolina* (New York, 1866), pp. 301–322.

send against her, and an army of soldiers—men brought up on horseback, with guns in their hands....

But if there were no other reason why we should never have war, would any sane nation make war on cotton? Without firing a gun, without drawing a sword, should they make war on us we could bring the whole world to our feet. The South is perfectly competent to go on, one, two, or three years without planting a seed of cotton. I believe that if she was to plant but half her cotton, for three years to come, it would be an immense advantage to her. I am not so sure but that after three years' entire abstinence she would come out stronger than ever she was before, and better prepared to enter afresh upon her great career of enterprise. What would happen if no cotton was furnished for three years? I will not stop to depict what everyone can imagine, but this is certain: England would topple headlong and carry the whole civilized world with her, save the South. No, you dare not make war on cotton. No power on earth dares to make war upon it. Cotton is king.

...Who can doubt, that has looked at recent events, that cotton is supreme? When the abuse of credit had destroyed credit and annihilated confidence; when thousands of the strongest commercial houses in the world were coming down, and hundreds of millions of dollars of supposed property evaporating in thin air;<sup>1</sup> when you came to a dead lock, and revolutions were threatened, what brought you up? Fortunately for you it was the commencement of the cotton season, and we have poured in upon you one million six hundred thousand bales of cotton just at the crisis to save you from destruction....

But, sir, the greatest strength of the South arises from the harmony of her political and social institutions. This harmony gives her a frame of society, the best in the world, and an extent of political freedom, combined with entire security, such as no other people ever enjoyed upon the face of the earth....

In all social systems there must be a class to do the menial duties, to perform the drudgery of life. That is, a

class requiring but a low order of intellect and but little skill. Its requisites are vigor, docility, fidelity. Such a class you must have, or you would not have that other class which leads progress, civilization, and refinement. It constitutes the very mud-sill of society and of political government; and you might as well attempt to build a house in the air, as to build either the one or the other, except on this mud-sill. Fortunately for the South, she found a race adapted to that purpose to her hand.... We use them for our purpose, and call them slaves. We found them slaves by the common "consent of mankind," which, according to Cicero, "*lex naturae est*."<sup>2</sup>

...The Senator from New York said yesterday that the whole world had abolished slavery. Aye, the *name*, but not the *thing*; all the powers of the earth cannot abolish that. God only can do it when he repeals the *fiat*, "the poor ye always have with you".... The difference between us is, that our slaves are hired for life and well compensated; there is no starvation, no begging, no want of employment among our people, and not too much employment either. Yours are hired by the day, not cared for, and scantily compensated.... We do not think that whites should be slaves either by law or necessity. Our slaves are black, of another and inferior race. The status in which we have placed them is an elevation. They are elevated from the condition in which God first created them, by being made our slaves.... They are happy, content, unambitious, and utterly incapable, from intellectual weakness, ever to give us any trouble by their aspirations. Yours are white, of your own race.... Our slaves do not vote. We give them no political power. Yours do vote, and...if they knew the tremendous secret, that the ballot-box is stronger than "an army with banners," and could combine, where would you be? Your society would be reconstructed, your government overthrown, your property divided.... You have been making war upon us to our very hearthstones. How would you like for us to send lecturers and agitators North, to teach these people this, to aid in combining, and to lead them?...

<sup>1</sup> Hammond is referring to the Panic of 1857.—Ed.

<sup>2</sup> "Is the law of nature."—Ed.



## 23

# *The Lincoln–Douglas Debates (1858)*

A B R A H A M L I N C O L N   a n d  
S T E P H E N   D O U G L A S

No debate has so captivated America as that between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas in their epic campaign for the United States Senate. Their exchanges were widely reported in the Northern press; the Southern newspapers largely ignored the contest, being equally disgusted with each man. Since the legislature selected senators at that time, the Democratic victory in the Illinois state elections sent Douglas back to the Senate. Douglas had been the acknowledged leader of the Democratic Party in Congress and thought that he had resolved the great sectional dispute over the issue of slavery with his proposal of popular sovereignty. In brief, the inhabitants of each territory were to determine the nature of their government and institutions. Unfortunately for Douglas, the first test of this principle, which overturned the Missouri Compromise of 1820, came in Kansas and led to years of bloodshed and the Lecompton Constitution. The latter document was the product of an entirely pro-slavery convention, and Douglas refused to support it, alienating the Southern leadership. In 1860 Douglas would gain the nomination of a divided Democratic Party, facing a Southern Democratic candidate, as well as the nominee of the new antislavery Republican Party, Abraham Lincoln. This version of the debates is taken from the original transcriptions, complete with crowd reaction.

## **Questions to Consider**

- Why was the future of slavery in the territories so important to most people at this time?
- Why did Lincoln object to popular sovereignty, and what did he propose in its place?
- How did the recent Dred Scott decision affect this election?
- Why does Douglas keep referring to Lincoln's opposition to the Mexican War?
- Was Lincoln a racist?

## The First Debate at Ottawa, Aug. 21

### DOUGLAS

...Mr. Lincoln served with me in the Legislature in 1836, when we both retired, and he subsided, or became submerged, and he was lost sight of as a public man for some years. In 1846, when Wilmot introduced his celebrated proviso, and the Abolition tornado swept over the country, Lincoln again turned up as a member of Congress from the Sangamon district.... Whilst in Congress, he distinguished himself by his opposition to the Mexican war, taking the side of the common enemy against his own country; ["that's true"] and when he returned home he found that the indignation of the people followed him everywhere, and he was again submerged, or obliged to retire into private life, forgotten by his former friends. ["And will be again."] He came up again in 1854, just in time to make this Abolition or Black Republican platform, in company with Giddings, Lovejoy, Chase, and Fred Douglass, for the Republican party to stand upon. [Laughter, "Hit him again," etc.]

...Having formed this new party for the benefit of deserters from Whiggery, and deserters from Democracy, and having laid down the Abolition platform which I have read, Lincoln now takes his stand and proclaims his Abolition doctrines. Let me read a part of them. In his speech at Springfield to the Convention which nominated him for the Senate, he said:—

"In my opinion it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' I believe this Government cannot endure permanently half Slave and half Free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved,—I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest, in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States,—old as well as new, North as well as South."

["Good," "good," and cheers.]

I am delighted to hear you Black Republicans say "good." [Laughter and cheers.] I have no doubt that doctrine expresses your sentiments ["Hit them again,"

"that's it."], and I will prove to you now, if you will listen to me, that it is revolutionary, and destructive of the existence of this Government. ["Hurrah for Douglas," "good," and cheers.] Mr. Lincoln, in the extract from which I have read, says that this Government cannot endure permanently in the same condition in which it was made by its framers,—divided into Free and Slave States. He says that it has existed for about seventy years thus divided, and yet he tells you that it cannot endure permanently on the same principles and in the same relative condition in which our fathers made it. ["Neither can it."] Why can it not exist divided into Free and Slave States? Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, Madison, Hamilton, Jay, and the great men of that day, made this government divided into Free States and Slave States, and left each State perfectly free to do as it pleased on the subject of slavery. ["Right, right."] Why can it not exist on the same principles on which our fathers made it? ["It can."] They knew when they framed the Constitution that in a country as wide and broad as this, with such a variety of climate, production, and interest, the people necessarily required different laws and institutions in different localities. They knew that the laws and regulations which would suit the granite hills of New Hampshire would be unsuited to the rice plantations of South Carolina, ["Right, right."] and they therefore provided that each State should retain its own Legislature and its own sovereignty, with the full and complete power to do as it pleased within its own limits, in all that was local and not national. [Applause.]

One of the reserved rights of the States was the right to regulate the relations between master and servant, on the slavery question. At the time the Constitution was framed there were thirteen States in the Union, twelve of which were slaveholding States and one a Free State. Suppose this doctrine of uniformity preached by Mr. Lincoln, that the States should all be Free or all be Slave had prevailed, and what would have been the result? Of course, the twelve slaveholding States would have overruled the one Free State, and slavery would have been fastened by a Constitutional provision on every inch of the American Republic, instead of being left, as our fathers wisely left it, to each State to decide for itself. ["Good, good," and "three cheers for Douglas."] Here I assert that uniformity in the local laws and institutions of the different States is neither possible or desirable. If uniformity had been adopted when the Government was established, it must inevitably have been the uniformity of slavery everywhere, or else the uniformity of negro citizenship and negro equality everywhere.

We are told by Lincoln that he is utterly opposed to the Dred Scott decision, and will not submit to it, for the reason that he says it deprives the negro of the rights

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Source: Edwin Erle Sparks, ed., *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library* (Springfield, 1908), 3: pp. 91–97, 100–110, 114–116, 122–124, 154–155, 161–166, 170–171, 179, 267–269, 281, 286, 289–295, 300–305, 338–344, 347–353, 358–359, 475–485, 488–496.



and privileges of citizenship. [Laughter and applause.] That is the first and main reason which he assigns for his warfare on the Supreme Court of the United States and its decision. I ask you, are you in favor of conferring upon the negro the rights and privileges of citizenship? ["No, no."] Do you desire to strike out of our State Constitution that clause which keeps slaves and free negroes out of the State, and allows the free negroes to flow in, ["Never."] and cover your prairies with black settlements? Do you desire to turn this beautiful State into a free negro colony, ["No, no."] in order that when Missouri abolishes slavery she can send one hundred thousand emancipated slaves into Illinois, to become citizens and voters, on an equality with yourselves? ["Never," "no."] If you desire negro citizenship, if you desire to allow them to come into the State and settle with the white man, if you desire them to vote on an equality with yourselves, and to make them eligible to office, to serve on juries, and to adjudge your rights, then support Mr. Lincoln and the Black Republican party, who are in favor of the citizenship of the negro. ["Never, never."] For one, I am opposed to negro citizenship in any and every form. [Cheers.] I believe this Government was made on the white basis. ["Good."] I believe it was made by white men, for the benefit of white men and their posterity forever, and I am in favor of confining citizenship to white men, men of European birth and descent, instead of conferring it upon negroes, Indians, and other inferior races. ["Good for you." "Douglas forever."]

Mr. Lincoln, following the example and lead of all the little Abolition orators, who go around and lecture in the basements of schools and churches, reads from the Declaration of Independence that all men were created equal, and then asks, How can you deprive a negro of that equality which God and the Declaration of Independence award to him? He and they maintain that negro equality is guaranteed by the laws of God, and that it is asserted in the Declaration of Independence. If they think so, of course they have a right to say so, and so vote. I do not question Mr. Lincoln's conscientious belief that the negro was made his equal, and hence is his brother; [laughter] but for my own part, I do not regard the negro as my equal, and positively deny that he is my brother, or any kin to me whatever. ["Never," "Hit him again," and cheers.]

...Now I do not believe that the Almighty ever intended the negro to be the equal of the white man. ["Never, never."] If he did, he has been a long time demonstrating the fact. [Cheers.] For thousands of years the negro has been a race upon the earth, and during all that time, in all latitudes and climates, wherever he has wandered or been taken, he has been inferior to the race which he has there met. He belongs to an infe-

rior race and must always occupy an inferior position. ["Good," "that's so," etc.] I do not hold that because the negro is our inferior that therefore he ought to be a slave. By no means can such a conclusion be drawn from what I have said. On the contrary, I hold that humanity and Christianity both require that the negro shall have and enjoy every right, every privilege, and every immunity consistent with the safety of the society in which he lives. ["That's so."] On that point, I presume, there can be no diversity of opinion. You and I are bound to extend to our inferior and dependent beings every right, every privilege, every facility and immunity consistent with the public good.

The question then arises, What rights and privileges are consistent with the public good? This is a question which each State and each Territory must decide for itself. Illinois has decided it for herself. We have provided that the negro shall not be a slave, and we have also provided that he shall not be a citizen, but protect him in his civil rights, in his life, his person and his property, only depriving him of all political rights whatsoever, and refusing to put him on an equality with the white man. ["Good."] That policy of Illinois is satisfactory to the Democratic party and to me; and if it were to the Republicans, there would then be no question upon the subject. But the Republicans say that he ought to be made a citizen, and when he becomes a citizen he becomes your equal, with all your rights and privileges. ["He never shall."] They assert the Dred Scott decision to be monstrous because it denies that the negro is or can be a citizen under the Constitution. Now, I hold that Illinois had a right to abolish and prohibit slavery as she did, and I hold that Kentucky has the same right to continue and protect slavery that Illinois had to abolish it. I hold that New York had as much right to abolish slavery as Virginia has to continue it, and that each and every State of this Union is a sovereign power, with the right to do as it pleases upon this question of slavery, and upon all its domestic institutions.

## LINCOLN

...I will say here, while upon this subject, that I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so. I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and the black races. There is a physical difference between the two which, in my judgment, will probably forever forbid their living together upon the footing of perfect equality; and inasmuch as it becomes a necessity that there must be a difference, I, as well as Judge Douglas, am in favor of the race to which I belong having the superior position. I

*white superiority*

have never said anything to the contrary, but I hold that, notwithstanding all this, there is no reason in the world why the negro is not entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence,—the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. [Loud cheers.] I hold that he is as much entitled to these as the white man. I agree with Judge Douglas he is not my equal in many respects,—certainly not in color, perhaps not in moral or intellectual endowment. But in the right to eat the bread, without the leave of anybody else, which his own hand earns, he is my equal, and the equal of Judge Douglas, and the equal of every living man. [Great applause.]

...He has read from my speech in Springfield, in which I say "that a house divided against itself can not stand." Does the Judge say it can stand? [Laughter.] I don't know whether he does or not. The Judge does not seem to be attending to me just now, but I would like to know if it is his opinion that a house divided against itself can stand. If he does, then there is a question of veracity, not between him and me, but between the Judge and an authority of a somewhat higher character. [Laughter and applause.]

Now, my friends, I ask your attention to this matter for the purpose of saying something seriously. I know that the Judge may readily enough agree with me that the maxim which was put forth by the Saviour is true, but he may allege that I misapply it; and the Judge has a right to urge that, in my application, I do misapply it, and then I have a right to show that I do not misapply it. When he undertakes to say that because I think this nation, so far as the question of slavery is concerned, will all become one thing or all the other, I am in favor of bringing about a dead uniformity in the various States, in all their institutions, he argues erroneously. The great variety of the local institutions in the States, springing from differences in the soil, differences in the face of the country, and in the climate, are bonds of Union. They do not make "a house divided against itself," but they make a house united. If they produce in one section of the country what is called for by the wants of another section, and this other section can supply the wants of the first, they are not matters of discord, but bonds of union, true bonds of union.

But can this question of slavery be considered as among these varieties in the institutions of the country? I leave it to you to say whether, in the history of our Government, this institution of slavery has not always failed to be a bond of union, and, on the contrary, been an apple of discord and an element of division in the house. [Cries of "yes, yes," and applause.] I ask you to consider whether, so long as the moral constitution of men's minds shall continue to be the same, after this generation and assemblage shall sink into the grave, and another race shall arise, with the same moral and

intellectual development we have,—whether, if that institution is standing in the same irritating position in which it now is, it will not continue an element of division? [Cries of "Yes, yes."] If so, then I have a right to say that, in regard to this question, the Union is a house divided against itself; and when the Judge reminds me that I have often said to him that the institution of slavery has existed for eighty years in some States, and yet it does not exist in some others, I agree to the fact, and I account for it by looking at the position in which our fathers originally placed it,—restricting it from the new Territories where it had not gone, and legislating to cut off its source by the abrogation of the slave-trade, thus putting the seal of legislation *against its spread*.

The public mind *did* rest in the belief that it was in the course of ultimate extinction. [Cries of "Yes, yes."] But lately, I think—and in this I charge nothing on the Judge's motives—lately, I think, that he, and those acting with him, have placed that institution on a new basis, which looks to the *perpetuity and nationalization of slavery*. [Loud cheers.] And while it is placed upon this new basis, I say, and I have said that I believe we shall not have peace upon the question until the opponents of slavery arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or, on the other hand, that its advocates will push it forward until it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South. Now, I believe if we could arrest the spread, and place it where Washington and Jefferson and Madison placed it, it would be in the course of ultimate extinction, and the public mind would, as for eighty years past, believe that it was in the course of ultimate extinction. The crisis would be past, and the institution might be let alone for a hundred years, if it should live so long, in the States where it exists; yet it would be going out of existence in the way best for both the black and the white races. [Great cheering.]

A Voice.—"Then do you repudiate Popular Sovereignty?"

Mr. Lincoln.—Well, then, let us talk about Popular Sovereignty. [Laughter.] What is Popular Sovereignty? [Cries of "A Humbug," "a humbug."] Is it the right of the people to have slavery or not have it, as they see fit, in the Territories? I will state—and I have an able man to watch me—my understanding is that Popular Sovereignty, as now applied to the question of slavery, does allow the people of a Territory to have slavery if they want to, but does not allow them *not* to have it if they *do not* want it. [Applause and laughter.] I do not mean that if this vast concourse of people were in a Territory of the United States, any one of them would be obliged to have a slave if he did not want one; but I do say that, as I understand the Dred Scott decision, if



any one man wants slaves, all the rest have no way of keeping that one man from holding them.

When I made my speech at Springfield, of which the Judge complains, and from which he quotes, I really was not thinking of the things which he ascribes to me at all. I had no thought in the world that I was doing anything to bring about a war between the Free and Slave States. I had no thought in the world that I was doing anything to bring about a political and social equality of the black and the white races. It never occurred to me that I was doing anything, or favoring anything to reduce to a dead uniformity all the local institutions of the various States. But I must say, in all fairness to him, if he thinks I am doing something which leads to these bad results, it is none the better that I did not mean it. It is just as fatal to the country, if I have any influence in producing it, whether I intend it or not. But can it be true that placing this institution upon the original basis—the basis upon which our fathers placed it—can have any tendency to set the Northern and the Southern States at war with one another, or that it can have any tendency to make the people of Vermont raise sugar-cane, because they raise it in Louisiana; or that it can compel the people of Illinois to cut pine logs on the Grand Prairie, where they will not grow, because they cut pine logs in Maine, where they do grow? [Laughter.]

...Now, my friends, I wish you to attend for a little while to one or two other things in that Springfield speech. My main object was to show, so far as my humble ability was capable of showing, to the people of this country, what I believed was the truth,—that there was a tendency, if not a conspiracy, among those who have engineered this slavery question for the last four or five years, to make slavery perpetual and universal in this nation.

...Judge Douglas...deduces, or draws out, from my speech this tendency of mine to set the States at war with one another, to make all the institutions uniform, and set the niggers and white people to marrying together. [Laughter.]

...Then he comes in with his plea to this charge, for the first time; and his plea when put in, as well as I can recollect it, amounted to this: that he never had any talk with Judge Taney or the President of the United States with regard to the Dred Scott decision before it was made.... What if Judge Douglas never did talk with Chief Justice Taney and the President before the Dred Scott decision was made, does it follow that he could not have had as perfect an understanding without talking as with it?...It can only show that he was used by conspirators, and was not a leader of them. [Vociferous cheering.]

...I want to ask your attention to a portion of the Nebraska bill, which Judge Douglas has quoted: "It being the true intent and meaning of this Act, not to leg-

islate slavery into any Territory or State, nor to exclude it therefrom, but to leave the people thereof perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way, subject only to the Constitution of the United States." Thereupon Judge Douglas and others began to argue in favor of "Popular Sovereignty,"—the right of the people to have slaves if they wanted them, and to exclude slavery if they did not want them. "But," said, in substance, a Senator from Ohio (Mr. Chase, I believe), "we more than suspect that you do not mean to allow the people to exclude slavery if they wish to; and if you do mean it, accept an amendment which I propose, expressly authorizing the people to exclude slavery."

...And now I state it as a fact, to be taken back if there is any mistake about it, that Judge Douglas and those acting with him voted that amendment down. [Tremendous applause.] I now think that those men who voted it down had a *real reason* for doing so. They know what that reason was. It looks to us, since we have seen the Dred Scott decision pronounced, holding that "under the Constitution," the people cannot exclude slavery,—I say it looks to outsiders, poor, simple, "amiable, intelligent gentlemen," [great laughter] as though the niche was left as a place to put that Dred Scott decision in, [laughter and cheers]—a niche which would have been spoiled by adopting the amendment. And now, I say again, if this was not the reason, it will avail the judge much more to calmly and good-humoredly point out to these people what that *other* reason was for voting the amendment down, than, swelling himself up, to vociferate that he may be provoked to call somebody a liar. [Tremendous applause.]

Again: There is in that same quotation from the Nebraska bill this clause: "It being the true intent and meaning of this bill not to legislate slavery into any Territory or State." I have always been puzzled to know what business the word "State" had in that connection. Judge Douglas knows. *He put it there.* He knows what he put it there for. We outsiders cannot say what he put it there for. The law they were passing was not about States, and was not making provision for States. What was it placed there for? After seeing the Dred Scott decision, which holds that the people cannot exclude slavery from a *Territory*, if another Dred Scott decision shall come, holding that they cannot exclude it from a State, we shall discover that when the word was originally put there, it was in view of something which was to come in due time, we shall see that it was the other half of something. [Applause.] I now say again, if there is any different reason for putting it there, Judge Douglas, in a good-humored way, without calling anybody a liar, *can tell what the reason was.* [Renewed cheers.]

...In the first place, what is necessary to make the institution national? Not war. There is no danger that the

people of Kentucky will shoulder their muskets, and, with a young nigger stuck on every bayonet, march into Illinois and force them upon us. There is no danger of our going over there and making war upon them. Then what is necessary for the nationalization of slavery? It is simply the next Dred Scott decision. It is merely for the Supreme Court to decide that no State under the Constitution can exclude it, just as they have already decided that under the Constitution neither Congress nor the Territorial Legislature can do it. When that is decided and acquiesced in, the whole thing is done.

This being true, and this being the way, as I think, that slavery is to be made national, let us consider what Judge Douglas is doing every day to that end. In the first place, let us see what influence he is exerting on public sentiment.... This must be borne in mind, as also the additional fact that Judge Douglas is a man of vast influence, so great that it is enough for many men to profess to believe anything, when they once find out that Judge Douglas professes to believe it. Consider also the attitude he occupies at the head of a large party,—a party which he claims has a majority of all the voters of the country. This man sticks to a decision which forbids the people of a Territory from excluding slavery, and he does so, not because he says it is right in itself,—he does not give any opinion on that,—but because it has been decided by the court; and being decided by the court, he is, and you are, bound to take it in your political action as law, not that he judges at all of its merits, but because a decision of the court is to him a “Thus saith the Lord.”

...Henry Clay, my *beau ideal* of a statesman, the man for whom I fought all my humble life,—Henry Clay once said of a class of men who would repress all tendencies to liberty and ultimate emancipation, that they must, if they would do this, go back to the era of our Independence, and muzzle the cannon which thunders its annual joyous return; they must blow out the moral lights around us; they must penetrate the human soul, and eradicate there the love of liberty; and then, and not till then, could they perpetuate slavery in this country! [Loud cheers.] To my thinking, Judge Douglas is, by his example and vast influence, doing that very thing in this community, [cheers] when he says that the negro has nothing in the Declaration of Independence. Henry Clay plainly understood the contrary.

Judge Douglas is going back to the era of our Revolution, and to the extent of his ability, muzzling the cannon which thunders its annual joyous return. When he invites any people, willing to have slavery, to establish it, he is blowing out the moral lights around us. [Cheers.] When he says he “cares not whether slavery is voted down or voted up,”—that it is a sacred right of self-government,—he is, in my judgment, penetrating the human soul and eradicating the light of reason and

the love of liberty in this American people. [Enthusiastic and continued applause.] And now I will only say that when, by all these means and appliances, Judge Douglas shall succeed in bringing public sentiment to an exact accordance with his own views; when these vast assemblages shall echo back all these sentiments; when they shall come to repeat his views and to avow his principles, and to say all that he says on these mighty questions,—then it needs only the formality of the second Dred Scott decision, which he endorses in advance, to make slavery alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South.

## DOUGLAS

...I have lived twenty-five years in Illinois, I have served you with all the fidelity and ability which I possess, [“That’s so,” “good” and cheers] and Mr. Lincoln is at liberty to attack my public action, my votes, and my conduct; but when he dares to attack my moral integrity by a charge of conspiracy between myself, Chief Justice Taney and the Supreme Court, and two Presidents of the United States, I will repel it. [“Three cheers for Douglas.”]

Mr. Lincoln has not character enough for integrity and truth, merely on his own *ipse dixit*, to arraign President Buchanan, President Pierce, and nine Judges of the Supreme Court, not one of whom would be complimented by being put on an equality with him. [“Hit him again,” “three cheers,” etc.] There is an unpardonable presumption in a man putting himself up before thousands of people, and pretending that his *ipse dixit*, without proof, without fact, and without truth, is enough to bring down and destroy the purest and best of living men. [“Hear him;” “three cheers.”]

...Mr. Lincoln wants to know why I voted against Mr. Chase’s amendment to the Nebraska bill. I will tell him. In the first place, the bill already conferred all the power which Congress had, by giving the people the whole power over the subject. Chase offered a proviso that they might abolish slavery, which by implication would convey the idea that they could prohibit by not introducing that institution. General Cass asked him to modify his amendment so as to provide that the people might either prohibit or introduce slavery, and thus make it fair and equal. Chase refused to so modify his proviso, and then General Cass and all the rest of us voted it down. [Immense cheering.] Those facts appear on the journals and debates of Congress, where Mr. Lincoln found the charge; and if he had told the whole truth, there would have been no necessity for me to occupy your time in explaining the matter. [Laughter and applause.]

Mr. Lincoln wants to know why the word “State,” as well as “Territory,” was put into the Nebraska bill. I will



tell him. It was put there to meet just such false arguments as he has been adducing. [Laughter.] That first, not only the people of the Territories should do as they pleased, but that when they come to be admitted as States, they should come into the Union with or without slavery, as the people determined. I meant to knock in the head this Abolition doctrine of Mr. Lincoln's, that there shall be no more Slave States, even if the people want them. [Tremendous applause.] And it does not do for him to say, or for any other Black Republican to say, that there is nobody in favor of the doctrine of no more Slave States, and that nobody wants to interfere with the right of the people to do as they please.

...Democracy is founded upon the eternal principle of right. ["That's the talk."] The plainer these principles are avowed before the people, the stronger will be the support which they will receive. I only wish I had the power to make them so clear that they would shine in the heavens for every man, woman, and child to read. [Loud cheering.] The first of those principles that I would proclaim would be in opposition to Mr. Lincoln's doctrine of uniformity between the different States, and I would declare instead the sovereign right of each State to decide the slavery question as well as all other domestic questions for themselves, without interference from any other State or power whatsoever. ["Hurrah for Douglas!"]

When that principle is recognized, you will have peace and harmony and fraternal feeling between all the States of this Union; until you do recognize that doctrine, there will be sectional warfare agitating and distracting the country. What does Mr. Lincoln propose? He says that the Union cannot exist divided into Free and Slave States. If it cannot endure thus divided, then he must strive to make them all Free or all Slave, which will inevitably bring about a dissolution of the Union. [Cries of "He can't do it."]

## Second Debate at Freeport, Aug. 27

### DOUGLAS

...The next question propounded to me by Mr. Lincoln is, Can the people of a Territory in any lawful way, against the wishes of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from their limits prior to the formation of a State constitution? I answer emphatically, as Mr. Lincoln has heard me answer a hundred times from every stump in Illinois, that in my opinion the people of a Territory can, by lawful means, exclude slavery from their limits prior to the formation of a State constitution. [Enthusiastic applause.] Mr. Lincoln knew that I had answered that question over and over again. He heard me argue the Nebraska bill on that principle all over the State in 1854, in 1855, and in 1856, and he has no excuse

for pretending to be in doubt as to my position on that question. It matters not what way the Supreme Court may hereafter decide as to the abstract question whether slavery may or may not go into a Territory under the Constitution, the people have the lawful means to introduce it or exclude it as they please, for the reason that slavery cannot exist a day or an hour anywhere, unless it is supported by local police regulations. ["Right, right."] Those police regulations can only be established by the local legislature; and if the people are opposed to slavery, they will elect representatives to that body who will by unfriendly legislation effectually prevent the introduction of it into their midst. If, on the contrary, they are for it, their legislation will favor its extension. Hence, no matter what the decision of the Supreme Court may be on that abstract question, still the right of the people to make a Slave Territory or a Free Territory is perfect and complete under the Nebraska bill. I hope Mr. Lincoln deems my answer satisfactory on that point....

The third question which Mr. Lincoln presented is, If the Supreme Court of the United States shall decide that a State of this Union cannot exclude slavery from its own limits will I submit to it? I am amazed that Lincoln should ask such a question. ["A schoolboy knows better."] Yes, a schoolboy does know better. Mr. Lincoln's object is to cast an imputation upon the Supreme Court. He knows that there never was but one man in America, claiming any degree of intelligence or decency, who ever for a moment pretended such a thing. It is true that the *Washington Union*, in an article published on the 17th of last December, did put forth that doctrine, and I denounced the article on the floor of the Senate, in a speech which Mr. Lincoln now pretends was against the President. The *Union* had claimed that slavery had a right to go into the Free States, and that any provision in the Constitution or laws of the Free States to the contrary were null and void. I denounced it in the Senate, as I said before, and I was the first man who did.

...He casts an imputation upon the Supreme Court of the United States, by supposing that they would violate the Constitution of the United States. I tell him that such a thing is not possible. [Cheers.] It would be an act of moral treason that no man on the bench could ever descend to....

The Black Republican creed lays it down expressly that under no circumstances shall we acquire any more territory, unless slavery is first prohibited in the country. I ask Mr. Lincoln whether he is in favor of that proposition. Are you [addressing Mr. Lincoln] opposed to the acquisition of any more territory, under any circumstances, unless slavery is prohibited in it? That he does not like to answer. When I ask him whether he stands up to that article in the platform of his party,

he turns, Yankee-fashion, and without answering it, asks me whether I am in favor of acquiring territory without regard to how it may affect the Union on the slavery question. ["Good."] I answer that whenever it becomes necessary, in our growth and progress, to acquire more territory, that I am in favor of it, without reference to the question of slavery; and when we have acquired it, I will leave the people free to do as they please, either to make it slave or free territory as they prefer.... It is idle to tell me or you that we have territory enough.... We have enough now for the present; but this is a young and a growing nation. It swarms as often as a hive of bees; and as new swarms are turned out each year, there must be hives in which they can gather and make their honey. ["Good."]

In less than fifteen years, if the same progress that has distinguished this country for the last fifteen years continues, every foot of vacant land between this and the Pacific Ocean, owned by the United States, will be occupied. Will you not continue to increase at the end of fifteen years as well as now? I tell you, increase, and multiply, and expand, is the law of this nation's existence. ["Good."] You cannot limit this great Republic by mere boundary lines, saying, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther."

...I trust now that Mr. Lincoln will deem himself answered on his four points. He racked his brain so much in devising these four questions that he exhausted himself, and had not strength enough to invent the others. [Laughter.] As soon as he is able to hold a council with his advisers, Lovejoy, Farnsworth, and Fred Douglass, he will frame and propound others. ["Good, good." Renewed laughter, in which Mr. Lincoln feebly joined, saying that he hoped with their aid to get seven questions, the number asked him by Judge Douglas, and so make conclusions even.] You Black Republicans who say good, I have no doubt think that they are all good men. ["White, white."]

I have reason to recollect that some people in this country think that Fred Douglass is a very good man. The last time I came here to make a speech, while talking from the stand to you, people of Freeport, as I am doing to-day, I saw a carriage—and a magnificent one it was,—drive up and take a position on the outside of the crowd; a beautiful young lady was sitting on the box-seat, whilst Fred Douglass and her mother reclined inside, and the owner of the carriage acted as driver. [Laughter, cheers...] I saw this in your own town. ["What of it?"] All I have to say of it is this, that if you, Black Republicans, think that the negro ought to be on a social equality with your wives and daughters, and ride in a carriage with your wife, whilst you drive the team, you have a perfect right to do so. ["Good, good," and cheers, mingled with hooting and cries of "white, white."]

...In the first place, you must remember that this was the organization of a new party. It is so declared in the resolutions themselves, which say that you are going to dissolve all old party ties and call the new party Republican. The old Whig party was to have its throat cut from ear to ear, and the Democratic party was to be annihilated and blotted out of existence, whilst in lieu of these parties the Black Republican party was to be organized on this Abolition platform. You know who the chief leaders were in breaking up and destroying these two great parties. Lincoln on the one hand, and Trumbull on the other, being disappointed politicians, [laughter] and having retired or been driven to obscurity by an outraged constituency because of their political sins, formed a scheme to Abolitionize the two parties, and lead the Old Line Whigs and Old Line Democrats captive, bound hand and foot, into the Abolition camp....

Mr. Lincoln says that he believes that this Union cannot continue to endure with Slave States in it, and yet he will not tell you distinctly whether he will vote for or against the admission of any more Slave States, but says he would not like to be put to the test. [Laughter.] I do not think he will be put to the test. [Renewed laughter.] I do not think that the people of Illinois desire a man to represent them who would not like to be put to the test on the performance of a high constitutional duty. [Cries of "Good."] I will retire in shame from the Senate of the United States when I am not willing to be put to the test in the performance of my duty. I have been put to severe tests. ["That is so."] I have stood by my principles in fair weather and in foul, in the sunshine and in the rain. I have defended the great principles of self-government here among you when Northern sentiment ran in a torrent against me,...and I have defended that same great principle when Southern sentiment came down like an avalanche upon me. I was not afraid of any test they put to me. I knew I was right; I knew my principles were sound; I knew that the people would see in the end that I had done right, and I knew that the God of heaven would smile upon me if I was faithful in the performance of my duty. [Cries of "Good," cheers and laughter.]

#### Fourth Debate at Charleston, September 18

##### LINCOLN

...While I was at the hotel to-day, an elderly gentleman called upon me to know whether I was really in favor of producing a perfect equality between the negroes and white people. [Great laughter.] While I had not proposed to myself on this occasion to say much on that subject, yet as the question was asked me, I thought I



would occupy perhaps five minutes in saying something in regard to it. I will say, then, that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races; [applause] that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say, in addition to this, that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race.

I say upon this occasion: I do not perceive that because the white man is to have the superior position the negro should be denied everything. I do not understand that because I do not want a negro woman for a slave I must necessarily want her for a wife. [Cheers and laughter.] My understanding is that I can just let her alone. I am now in my fiftieth year, and I certainly never have had a black woman for either a slave or a wife. So it seems to me quite possible for us to get along without making either slaves or wives of negroes. I will add to this that I have never seen, to my knowledge, a man, woman, or child who was in favor of producing a perfect equality, social and political, between negroes and white men. I recollect of but one distinguished instance that I ever heard of so frequently as to be entirely satisfied of its correctness, and that is the case of Judge Douglas's old friend Colonel Richard M. Johnson. [Laughter and cheers.]

I will also add to the remarks I have made (for I am not going to enter at large upon this subject), that I have never had the least apprehension that I or my friends would marry negroes if there was no law to keep them from it; [laughter] but as Judge Douglas and his friends seem to be in great apprehension that they might, if there were no law to keep them from it, [roars of laughter] I give him the most solemn pledge that I will to the very last stand by the law of this State, which forbids the marrying of white people with negroes. [Continued laughter and applause.] I will add one further word, which is this: that I do not understand that there is any place where an alteration of the social and political relations of the negro and the white man can be made, except in the State Legislature,—not in the Congress of the United States; and as I do not really apprehend the approach of any such thing myself, and as Judge Douglas seems to be in constant horror that some such danger is rapidly approaching, I propose as the best means to prevent it that the Judge be kept at home, and placed in the State Legislature to fight the measure.

[Uproarious laughter and applause.] I do not propose dwelling longer at this time on this subject.

## DOUGLAS

...Mr. Lincoln simply contented himself at the outset by saying that he was not in favor of social and political equality between the white man and the negro, and did not desire the law so changed as to make the latter voters or eligible to office. I am glad that I have at last succeeded in getting an answer out of him upon this question of negro citizenship and eligibility to office, for I have been trying to bring him to the point on it ever since this canvass commenced....

I ask you to reflect on these things, for I tell you that there is a conspiracy to carry this election for the Black Republicans by slander, and not by fair means. Mr. Lincoln's speech this day is conclusive evidence of the fact....

He has several times charged that the Supreme Court, President Pierce, President Buchanan, and myself, at the time I introduced the Nebraska bill in January, 1854, at Washington, entered into a conspiracy to establish slavery all over this country. I branded this charge as a falsehood, and then he repeated it; asked me to analyze its truth; and answer it. I told him; "Mr. Lincoln, I know what you are after,—you want to occupy my time in personal matters, to prevent me from showing up the revolutionary principles which the Abolition party—whose candidate you are—have proclaimed to the world."

But he asked me to analyze his proof, and I did so. I called his attention to the fact that at the time the Nebraska bill was introduced, there was no such case as the Dred Scott case pending in the Supreme Court, nor was it brought there for years afterwards, and hence that it was impossible that there could have been any such conspiracy between the Judges of the Supreme Court and the other parties involved....

Lincoln says that President Buchanan was in the conspiracy at Washington in the winter of 1854, when the Nebraska bill was introduced. The history of this country shows that James Buchanan was at that time representing this country at the Court of St. James, Great Britain, with distinguished ability and usefulness, that he had not been in the United States for nearly a year previous, and that he did not return until about three years after. [Cheers.] Yet Mr. Lincoln keeps repeating this charge of conspiracy against Mr. Buchanan when the public records prove it to be untrue.

Having proved it to be false as far as the Supreme Court and President Buchanan are concerned, I drop it, leaving the public to say whether I, by myself, without their concurrence, could have gone into a conspiracy with them. [Laughter and cheers.] My friends, you see

that the object clearly is to conduct the canvass on personal matters, and hunt me down with charges that are proven to be false by the public records of the country....

Fellow-citizens, I came here for the purpose of discussing the leading political topics which now agitate the country. I have no charges to make against Mr. Lincoln.... If Mr. Lincoln is a man of bad character, I leave you to find it out; if his votes in the past are not satisfactory, I leave others to ascertain the fact; if his course on the Mexican war was not in accordance with your notions of patriotism and fidelity to our own country as against a public enemy, I leave you to ascertain the fact. I have no assaults to make upon him, except to trace his course on the questions that now divide the country and engross so much of the people's attention.

You know that prior to 1854 this country was divided into two great political parties, one the Whig, the other the Democratic. I, as a Democrat for twenty years prior to that time, had been in public discussions in this State as an advocate of Democratic principles, and I can appeal with confidence to every Old Line Whig within the hearing of my voice to bear testimony that during all that period I fought you Whigs like a man on every question that separated the two parties. I had the highest respect for Henry Clay as a gallant party leader, as an eminent statesman, and as one of the bright ornaments of this country; but I conscientiously believed that the Democratic party was right on the questions which separated the Democrats from the Whigs. The man does not live who can say that I ever personally assailed Henry Clay or Daniel Webster, or any one of the leaders of that great party, whilst I combated with all my energy the measures they advocated.

What did we we differ about in those days? Did Whigs and Democrats differ about this slavery question? On the contrary, did we not, in 1850, unite to a man in favor of that system of Compromise measures which Mr. Clay introduced, Webster defended, Cass supported, and Fillmore approved and made the law of the land by his signature? While we agreed on those Compromise measures, we differed about a bank, the tariff, distribution, the specie circular, the sub-treasury, and other questions of that description. Now, let me ask you which one of those questions on which Whigs and Democrats then differed now remains to divide the two great parties? Every one of those questions which divided Whigs and Democrats has passed away, the country has outgrown them, they have passed into history. Hence it is immaterial whether you were right or I was right on the bank, the sub-treasury, and other questions, because they no longer continue living issues. What, then, has taken the place of those questions about which we once differed? The slavery question has now

become the leading and controlling issue; that question on which you and I agreed, on which the Whigs and Democrats united, has now become the leading issue between the National Democracy on the one side, and the Republican, or Abolition, party on the other.

...When the Whig party assembled in 1852 at Baltimore in National Convention for the last time, to nominate Scott for the Presidency, they adopted as a part of their platform the Compromise measures of 1850 as the cardinal plank upon which every Whig would stand, and by which he would regulate his future conduct. When the Democratic party assembled at the same place one month after, to nominate General Pierce, we adopted the same platform so far as those Compromise measures were concerned, agreeing that we would stand by those glorious measures as a cardinal article in the Democratic faith. Thus you see that in 1852 all the old Whigs and all the old Democrats stood on a common plank so far as this slavery question was concerned, differing on other questions...

In the northern part of the State I found Lincoln's ally, in the person of Fred Douglass, the negro, preaching Abolition doctrines; while Lincoln was discussing the same principles down here.... I witnessed an effort made at Chicago by Lincoln's then associates, and now supporters, to put Fred Douglass, the negro, on the stand at a Democratic meeting, to reply to the illustrious General Cass, when he was addressing the people there. ["Shame on them."] They had the same negro hunting me down, and they now have a negro traversing the northern counties of the State and speaking in behalf of Lincoln. ["Hit him again; he's a disgrace to the white people," etc.] Lincoln knows that when we were at Freeport in joint discussion there was a distinguished colored friend of his there then who was on the stump for him, [shouts of laughter] and who made a speech there the night before we spoke, and another the night after, a short distance from Freeport, in favor of Lincoln; and in order to show how much interest the colored brethren felt in the success of their brother Abe, [renewed laughter] I have with me here, and would read it if it would not occupy too much of my time, a speech made by Fred Douglass in Poughkeepsie, N. Y., a short time since, to a large Convention, in which he conjures all the friends of negro equality and negro citizenship to rally as one man around Abraham Lincoln, the perfect embodiment of their principles, and by all means to defeat Stephen A. Douglas. ["It can't be done," etc.]

...Their principles in the north are jet-black, [laughter] in the center they are in color a decent mulatto, [renewed laughter] and in lower Egypt they are almost white. [Shouts of laughter.] Why, I admired many of the white sentiments contained in Lincoln's speech at Jonesboro, and could not help but contrast them with the speeches of the same distinguished orator made in



the northern part of the State. Down here he denies that the Black Republican party is opposed to the admission of any more Slave States, under any circumstances, and says that they are willing to allow the people of each State, when it wants to come into the Union, to do just as it pleases on the question of slavery. In the north, you find Lovejoy, their candidate for Congress in the Bloomington District, Farnsworth, their candidate in the Chicago District, and Washburne, their candidate in the Galena District, all declaring that never will they consent, under any circumstances, to admit another Slave State, even if the people want it. ["That's so."] Thus, while they avow one set of principles up there, they avow another and entirely different set down here. And here let me recall to Mr. Lincoln the scriptural quotation which he has applied to the Federal Government, that a house divided against itself cannot stand, and ask him how does he expect this Abolition party to stand when in one half of the State it advocates a set of principles which it has repudiated in the other half? [Laughter and applause.]

...I want to know whether he is for or against negro citizenship. He declared his utter opposition to the Dred Scott decision, and advanced as a reason that the court had decided that it was not possible for a negro to be a citizen under the Constitution of the United States. If he is opposed to the Dred Scott decision for that reason, he must be in favor of conferring the right and privilege of citizenship upon the negro! I have been trying to get an answer from him on that point, but have never yet obtained one, and I will show you why. In every speech he made in the north he quoted the Declaration of Independence to prove that all men were created equal, and insisted that the phrase "all men" included the negro as well as the white man, and that the equality rested upon divine law....

Lincoln maintains there that the Declaration of Independence asserts that the negro is equal to the white man, and that under divine law; and if he believes so, it was rational for him to advocate negro citizenship, which, when allowed, puts the negro on an equality under the law. ["No negro equality for us; down with Lincoln."] I say to you in all frankness, gentlemen, that in my opinion a negro is not a citizen, cannot be, and ought not to be, under the Constitution of the United States. ["That's the doctrine."] I will not even qualify my opinion to meet the declaration of one of the Judges of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott case, "that a negro descended from African parents, who was imported into this country as a slave, is not a citizen, and cannot be." I say that this government was established on the white basis. It was made by white men, for the benefit of white men and their posterity forever, and never should be administered by any except white men. [Cheers.] I declare that a negro ought

not to be a citizen, whether his parents were imported into this country as slaves or not, or whether or not he was born here. It does not depend upon the place a negro's parents were born, or whether they were slaves or not, but upon the fact that he is a negro, belonging to a race incapable of self-government, and for that reason ought not to be on an equality with white men. [Immense applause.]

...In conclusion, let me ask you why should this Government be divided by a geographical line,—arraying all men North in one great hostile party against all men South?...We have existed and prospered from that day to this thus divided, and have increased with a rapidity never before equaled, in wealth, the extension of territory, and all the elements of power and greatness, until we have become the first nation on the face of the globe. Why can we not thus continue to prosper? We can, if we will live up to and execute the Government upon those principles upon which our fathers established it. During the whole period of our existence, Divine Providence has smiled upon us, and showered upon our nation richer and more abundant blessings than have ever been conferred upon any other.

## LINCOLN

...Judge Douglas has said to you that he has not been able to get from me an answer to the question whether I am in favor of negro citizenship. So far as I know, the Judge never asked me the question before. [Applause.] He shall have no occasion to ever ask it again, for I tell him very frankly that I am not in favor of negro citizenship. [Renewed applause.] This furnishes me an occasion for saying a few words upon the subject. I mentioned, in a certain speech of mine which has been printed, that the Supreme Court had decided that a negro could not possibly be made a citizen; and without saying what was my ground of complaint in regard to that, or whether I had any ground of complaint, Judge Douglas has from that thing manufactured nearly everything that he ever says about my disposition to produce an equality between the negroes and the white people. [Laughter and applause.] If any one will read my speech, he will find I mentioned that as one of the points decided in the course of the Supreme Court opinions, but I did not state what objection I had to it. But Judge Douglas tells the people what my objection was when I did not tell them myself. [Loud applause and laughter.] Now, my opinion is that the different States have the power to make a negro a citizen, under the Constitution of the United States, if they choose. The Dred Scott decision decides that they have not that power. If the State of Illinois had that power, I should be opposed to the exercise of it. [Cries of "Good, good," and applause.] That is all I have to say about it.

Judge Douglas has told me that he heard my speeches north, and my speeches south; that he had heard me at Ottawa and at Freeport in the north, and recently at Jonesboro in the south and there was a very different cast of sentiment in the speeches made at the different points. I will not charge upon Judge Douglas that he wilfully misrepresents me but I call upon every fair-minded man to take these speeches and read them, and I dare him to point out any difference between my speeches north and south. [Great cheering.]

...Have we ever had any peace on this slavery question? ["No, no."] When are we to have peace upon it, if it is kept in the position it now occupies? ["Never."] How are we ever to have peace upon it? That is an important question. To be sure, if we will all stop, and allow Judge Douglas and his friends to march on in their present career until they plant the institution all over the nation, here and wherever else our flag waves, and we acquiesce in it, there will be peace. But let me ask Judge Douglas how he is going to get the people to do that? [Applause.] They have been wrangling over this question for at least forty years. This was the cause of the agitation resulting in the Missouri Compromise; this produced the troubles at the annexation of Texas, in the acquisition of the territory acquired in the Mexican War.

Again, this was the trouble which was quieted by the Compromise of 1850, when it was settled "*forever*," as both the great political parties declared in their National Conventions. That "*forever*" turned out to be just four years, [laughter] when Judge Douglas himself *reopened it*. [Immense applause. Cries of "Hit him again," etc.] When is it likely to come to an end? He introduced the Nebraska bill in 1854 to put *another end* to the slavery agitation. He promised that it would finish it all up immediately, and he has never made a speech since, until he got into a quarrel with the President about the Lecompton Constitution, in which he has not declared that we are *just at the end* of the slavery agitation. But in one speech, I think last winter, he did say that he didn't quite see when the end of the slavery agitation would come. [Laughter and cheers.] Now he tells us again that it is all over, and the people of Kansas have voted down the Lecompton Constitution. How is it over? That was only one of the attempts at putting an end to the slavery agitation,—one of these "*final settlements*." [Renewed laughter.] Is Kansas in the Union?... Has the voting down of that constitution put an end to all the trouble? Is that more likely to settle it than every one of these previous attempts to settle the slavery agitation? [Cries of "No, no."]

...I say, then, there is no way of putting an end to the slavery agitation amongst us but to put it back upon the basis where our fathers placed it; [applause] no way but to keep it out of our new Territories, [renewed ap-

plause]—to restrict it forever to the old States where it now exists. [Tremendous and prolonged cheering; cries of "that's the doctrine;" "good, good," etc.] Then the public mind *will* rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction. That is one way of putting an end to the slavery agitation. [Applause.]

The other way is for us to surrender, and let Judge Douglas and his friends have their way and plant slavery over all the States; cease speaking of it as in any way a wrong; regard slavery as one of the common matters of property, and speak of negroes as we do our of horses and cattle. But while it drives on in its state of progress as it is now driving, and as it has driven for the last five years, I have ventured the opinion, and I say today, that we will have no end to the slavery agitation until it takes one turn or the other. [Applause.] I do not mean that when it takes a turn toward ultimate extinction it will be in a day, nor in a year, nor in two years. I do not suppose that in the most peaceful way ultimate extinction would occur in less than a hundred years at least; but that it will occur in the best way for both races, in God's own good time, I have no doubt. [Applause.]

## Fifth Debate at Galesburg, Oct. 7

### DOUGLAS

...The Republican party is availing itself of every unworthy means in the present contest to carry the election, because its leaders know that if they let this chance slip they will never have another, and their hopes of making this a Republican State will be blasted forever.... That party is unlike all other political organizations in this country. All other parties have been national in their character,—have avowed their principles alike in the Slave and Free States, in Kentucky, as well as Illinois, in Louisiana as well as in Massachusetts....

But now you have a sectional organization, a party which appeals to the Northern section of the Union against the Southern, a party which appeals to Northern passion, Northern pride, Northern ambition, Northern prejudices, against Southern people, the Southern States, and Southern institutions. The leaders of that party hope that they will be able to unite the Northern States in one great sectional party; and inasmuch as the North is the strongest section, that they will thus be enabled to out-vote, conquer, govern and control the South. Hence you find that they now make speeches advocating principles and measures which cannot be defended in any slaveholding State of this Union. Is there a Republican residing in Galesburg who can travel into Kentucky and carry his principles with him across the Ohio? ["No."] What Republican from

Respect territories → keep in states where forefathers had it → will lead to extinction



Massachusetts can visit the Old Dominion without leaving his principles behind him when he crosses Mason and Dixon's line? Permit me to say to you in perfect good humor, but in all sincerity, that no political creed is sound which cannot be proclaimed fearlessly in every State of this Union where the Federal Constitution is the supreme law of the land. ["That's so," and cheers.]

...I will tell you that this Chicago doctrine of Lincoln's—declaring that the negro and the white man are made equal by the Declaration of Independence and by Divine Providence—is a monstrous heresy. ["That's so," and terrible applause.] The signers of the Declaration of Independence never dreamed of the negro when they were writing that document. They referred to white men, to men of European birth and European descent, when they declared the equality of all men. I see a gentleman there in the crowd shaking his head. Let me remind him that when Thomas Jefferson wrote that document, he was the owner, and so continued until his death, of a large number of slaves. Did he intend to say in that Declaration that his negro slaves, which he held and treated as property, were created his equals by divine law, and that he was violating the law of God every day of his life by holding them as slaves? ["No, no."] It must be borne in mind that when that Declaration was put forth, every one of the thirteen Colonies, were slaveholding Colonies, and every man who signed that instrument represented a slaveholding constituency. Recollect, also, that no one of them emancipated his slaves, much less put them on an equality with himself, after he signed the Declaration. On the contrary, they all continued to hold their negroes as slaves during the Revolutionary War. Now, do you believe—are you willing to have it said—that every man who signed the Declaration of Independence declared the negro his equal, and then was hypocrite enough to continue to hold him as a slave, in violation of what he believed to be the divine law? ["No, no."] And yet when you say that the Declaration of Independence includes the negro you charge the signers of it with hypocrisy.

I say to you, frankly, that in my opinion this Government was made by our fathers on the white basis. It was made by white men for the benefit of white men and their posterity forever, and was intended to be administered by white men in all time to come. ["That's so," and cheers.] But while I hold that under our Constitution and political system the negro is not a citizen, cannot be a citizen, and ought not to be a citizen, it does not follow by any means that he should be a slave. On the contrary, it does follow that the negro, as an inferior race, ought to possess every right, every privilege, every immunity, which he can safely exercise, consistent with the safety of the society in which he

lives.... If you ask me the nature and extent of these privileges, I answer that that is a question which the people of each State must decide for themselves.... The great principle of this Government is, that each State has the right to do as it pleases on all these questions, and no other State or power on earth has the right to interfere with us, or complain of us merely because our system differs from theirs.

...Let us see whether I cannot explain it to the satisfaction of all impartial men. Chief Justice Taney has said, in his opinion in the Dred Scott case, that a negro slave, being property, stands on an equal footing with other property, and that the owner may carry them into United States territory the same as he does other property. ["That's so."] Suppose any two of you, neighbors, should conclude to go to Kansas, one carrying \$100,000 worth of negro slaves, and the other \$100,000 worth of mixed merchandise, including quantities of liquors. You both agree that under that decision you may carry your property to Kansas; but when you get it there, the merchant who is possessed of the liquors is met by the Maine liquor law, which prohibits the sale or use of his property, and the owner of the slaves is met by equally unfriendly legislation, which makes his property worthless after he gets it there. What is the right to carry your property into the Territory worth to either, when unfriendly legislation in the Territory renders it worthless after you get it there? The slaveholder when he gets his slaves there finds that there is no local law to protect him in holding them, no slave code, no police regulation maintaining and supporting him in his right, and he discovers at once that the absence of such friendly legislation excludes his property from the Territory just as irresistibly as if there was a positive Constitutional prohibition excluding it.

Thus you find it is with any kind of property in a Territory: It depends for its protection on the local and municipal law. If the people of a Territory want slavery, they make friendly legislation to introduce it; but if they do not want it, they withhold all protection from it; and then it cannot exist there.

## LINCOLN

...I only have to remark upon this part of the Judge's speech (and that, too, very briefly, for I shall not detain myself, or you, upon that point for any great length of time), that I believe the entire records of the world, from the date of the Declaration of Independence up to within three years ago, may be searched in vain for one single affirmation, from one single man, that the negro was not included in the Declaration of Independence; I think I may defy Judge Douglas to show that he ever said so, that Washington ever said so, that any President ever said so, that any member of Congress

ever said so, or that any living man upon the whole earth ever said so, until the necessities of the present policy of the Democratic party, in regard to slavery, had to invent that affirmation. [Tremendous applause.] And I will remind Judge Douglas and this audience that while Mr. Jefferson was the owner of slaves, as undoubtedly he was, in speaking upon this very subject he used the strong language that “he trembled for his country when he remembered that God was just;” and I will offer the highest premium in my power to Judge Douglas if he will show that he, in all his life, ever uttered a sentiment at all akin to that of Jefferson. [Great applause and cries of “Hit him again;” “Good, good.”]...

The Judge has also detained us a while in regard to the distinction between his party and our party. His he assumes to be a national party,—ours a sectional one. He does this in asking the question whether this country has any interest in the maintenance of the Republican party? He assumes that our party is altogether sectional,—that the party to which he adheres is national; and the argument is, that no party can be a rightful party—can be based upon rightful principles—unless it can announce its principles everywhere. I presume that Judge Douglas could not go into Russia and announce the doctrine of our national Democracy; he could not denounce the doctrine of kings and emperors and monarchies in Russia; and it may be true of this country that in some places we may not be able to proclaim a doctrine as clearly as the truth of Democracy, because there is a section so directly opposed to it that they will not tolerate us in doing so. Is it the true test of the soundness of a doctrine that in some places people won't let you proclaim it? [“No, no, no.”] Is that the way to test the truth of any doctrine? [“No, no, no.”] Why, I understood that at one time the people of Chicago would not let Judge Douglas preach a certain favorite doctrine of his. [Laughter and cheers.] I commend to his consideration the question, whether he takes that as a test of the unsoundness of what he wanted to preach? [Loud cheers.]...

I ask his attention also to the fact that by the rule of nationality he is himself fast becoming sectional. [Great cheers and laughter.] I ask his attention to the fact that his speeches would not go as current now south of the Ohio River as they have formerly gone there. [Loud cheers.] I ask his attention to the fact that he felicitates himself to-day that all the Democrats of the Free States are agreeing with him, [applause] while he omits to tell us that the Democrats of any Slave State agree with him. If he has not thought of this, I commend to his consideration the evidence in his own declaration, on this day, of his becoming sectional too. [Immense cheering.] I see it rapidly approaching. Whatever may be the result of this ephemeral contest between Judge Douglas

and myself, I see the day rapidly approaching when his pill of sectionalism, which he has been thrusting down the throats of Republicans for years past, will be crowded down his own throat. [Tremendous applause.]...

The Judge tells us, in proceeding, that he is opposed to making any odious distinction between Free and Slave States. I am altogether unaware that the Republicans are in favor of making any odious distinctions between the Free and Slave States. But there is still a difference, I think, between Judge Douglas and the Republicans in this. I suppose that the real difference between Judge Douglas and his friends, and the Republicans on the contrary is, that the Judge is not in favor of making any difference between slavery and liberty, that he is in favor of eradicating, of pressing out of view, the questions of preference in this country for free or slave institutions; and consequently every sentiment he utters discards the idea that there is any wrong in slavery. Everything that emanates from him or his coadjutors in their course of policy carefully excludes the thought that there is anything wrong in slavery. All their arguments, if you will consider them, will be seen to exclude the thought that there is anything whatever wrong in slavery. If you will take the Judge's speeches, and select the short and pointed sentences expressed by him,—as his declaration that he “don't care whether slavery is voted up or down,” you will see at once that this is perfectly logical, if you do not admit that slavery is wrong. If you do admit that it is wrong, Judge Douglas cannot logically say he don't care whether a wrong is voted up or down.

Judge Douglas declares that if any community want slavery, they have a right to have it. He can say that logically, if he says that there is no wrong in slavery; but if you admit that there is a wrong in it, he cannot logically say that anybody has a right to do wrong. He insists that, upon the score of equality, the owners of slaves and owners of property—of horses and every other sort of property—should be alike, and hold them alike in a new Territory. That is perfectly logical if the two species of property are alike and are equally founded in right. But if you admit that one of them is wrong, you cannot institute any equality between right and wrong. And from this difference of sentiment,—the belief on the part of one that the institution is wrong, and a policy springing from that belief which looks to the arrest of the enlargement of that wrong; and this other sentiment, that it is no wrong, and a policy sprung from that sentiment, which will tolerate no idea of preventing the wrong from growing larger, and looks to there never being an end of it through all the existence of things,—arises the real difference between Judge Douglas and his friends on the one hand, and the Republicans on the other.



Now, I confess myself as belonging to that class in the country who contemplate slavery as a moral, social, and political evil, having due regard for its actual existence amongst us and the difficulties of getting rid of it in any satisfactory way, and to all the constitutional obligations which have been thrown about it; but, nevertheless, desire a policy that looks to the prevention of it as a wrong, and looks hopefully to the time when as a wrong it may come to an end. [Great applause.]...

The essence of the Dred Scott case is compressed into the sentence which I will now read: "Now, as we have already said in an earlier part of this opinion, upon a different point, the right of property in a slave is distinctly and expressly affirmed in the Constitution." I repeat it, "The right of property in a slave is distinctly and expressly affirmed in the Constitution."

What is it to be "affirmed" in the Constitution? Made firm in the Constitution,—so made that it cannot be separated from the Constitution without breaking the Constitution; durable as the Constitution, and part of the Constitution. Now, remembering the provision of the Constitution which I have read; affirming that that instrument is the supreme law of the land; that the Judges of every State shall be bound by it, any law or constitution of any State to the contrary notwithstanding; that the right of property in a slave is affirmed in that Constitution, is made, formed into, and cannot be separated from it without breaking it; durable as the instrument; part of the instrument;—what follows as a short and even syllogistic argument from it—I think it follows, and I submit to the consideration of men capable of arguing, whether as I state it, in syllogistic form, the argument has any fault in it?

Nothing in the Constitution or laws of any State can destroy a right distinctly and expressly affirmed in the Constitution of the United States.

The right of property in a slave is distinctly and expressly affirmed in the Constitution of the United States.

Therefore, nothing in the Constitution or laws of any State can destroy the right of property in a slave.

I believe that no fault can be pointed out in that argument; assuming the truth of the premises, the conclusion, so far as I have capacity at all to understand it, follows inevitably. There is a fault in it as I think, but the fault is not in the reasoning: the falsehood in fact is a fault in the premises.

I believe that the right of property in a slave is not distinctly and expressly affirmed in the Constitution, and Judge Douglas thinks it is. I believe that the Supreme Court and the advocates of that decision may search in vain for the place in the Constitution where the right of property in a slave is distinctly and expressly affirmed. I say, therefore, that I think one of the premises is not true in fact. But it is true with Judge

Douglas. It is true with the Supreme Court who pronounced it. They are estopped from denying it, and being estopped from denying it the conclusion follows that, the Constitution of the United States being the supreme law, no constitution or law can interfere with it. It being affirmed in the decision that the right of property in a slave is distinctly and expressly affirmed in the Constitution, the conclusion inevitably follows that no State law or constitution can destroy that right....

I have said, upon a former occasion, and I repeat it now, that the course of argument that Judge Douglas makes use of upon this subject (I charge not his motives in this), is preparing the public mind for that new Dred Scott decision.

## Seventh Debate at Alton, Oct. 15

### LINCOLN

*threatening existence of Union*

...Has anything ever threatened the existence of this Union save and except this very institution of slavery? What is it that we hold most dear amongst us? Our own liberty and prosperity. What has ever threatened our liberty and prosperity, save and except this institution of slavery? If this is true, how do you propose to improve the condition of things by enlarging slavery,—by spreading it out and making it bigger? You can have a wen or cancer upon your person, and not be able to cut it out, lest you bleed to death; but surely it is no way to cure it, to engraft it and spread it over your whole body. That is no proper way of treating what you regard a wrong. You see this peaceful way of dealing with it as a wrong,—restricting the spread of it, and not allowing it to go into new countries where it has not already existed. That is the peaceful way, the old-fashioned way, the way in which the fathers themselves set us the example.

On the other hand, I have said there is a sentiment which treats it as not being wrong. That is the Democratic sentiment of this day. I do not mean to say that every man who stands within that range positively asserts that it is right. That class will include all who positively assert that it is right, and all who, like Judge Douglas, treat it as indifferent and do not say it is either right or wrong. These two classes of men fall within the general class of those who do not look upon it as a wrong. And if there be among you anybody who supposes that he, as a Democrat, can consider himself "as much opposed to slavery as anybody," I would like to reason with him. You never treat it as a wrong. What other thing that you consider as a wrong do you deal with as you deal with that? Perhaps, you say it is a wrong, *but your leader never does, and you quarrel with*



anybody who says it is wrong. Although you pretend to say so yourself, you can find no fit place to deal with it as a wrong. You must not say anything about it in the Free States, *because it is not here*. You must not say anything about it in the Slave States, *because it is there*. You must not say anything about it in the pulpit, because that is religion, and has nothing to do with it. You must not say anything about it in politics, *because that will disturb the security of "my place."* [Shouts of laughter and cheers.] There is no place to talk about it as being a wrong, although you say yourself it is wrong.

...The Democratic policy in regard to that institution will not tolerate the merest breath, the slightest hint, of the least degree of wrong about it.

...That is the real issue. That is the issue that will continue in this country when these poor tongues of Judge Douglas and myself shall be silent. It is the eternal struggle between these two principles—right and wrong—throughout the world. They are the two principles that have stood face to face from the beginning of time, and will ever continue to struggle. The one is the common right of humanity, and the other the "divine right of kings." It is the same principle in whatever shape it develops itself. It is the same spirit that says, "You work and toil and earn bread, and I'll eat it." [Loud applause.] No matter in what shape it comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to bestride the people of his own nation and live by the fruit of their labor, or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race, it is the same tyrannical principle.

tyranny

## DOUGLAS

...His first criticism upon me is the expression of his hope that the war of the Administration will be prosecuted against me and the Democratic party of this State with vigor. He wants that war prosecuted with vigor; I have no doubt of it. His hopes of success and the hopes of his party depend solely upon it. They have no chance of destroying the Democracy of this State except by the aid of Federal patronage. ["That's a fact;" "Good," and cheers.]...There is something really refreshing in the thought that Mr. Lincoln is in favor of prosecuting one war vigorously. [Roars of laughter.] It is the first war I ever knew him to be in favor of prosecuting. [Renewed laughter.] It is the first war that I ever knew him to believe to be just or constitutional. [Laughter and cheers.] When the Mexican war was being waged, and the American army was surrounded by the enemy in Mexico, he thought that war was unconstitutional, un-

necessary, and unjust. ["That's so;" "You've got him;" "He voted against it," etc.] He thought it was not commenced on the right spot....

...It is one thing to be opposed to the declaration of a war, another and very different thing to take sides with the enemy against your own country after the war has been commenced. ["Good," and cheers.] Our army was in Mexico at the time, many battles had been fought; our citizens, who were defending the honor of their country's flag, were surrounded by the daggers, the guns, and the poison of the enemy. Then it was that Corwin made his speech in which he declared that the American soldiers ought to be welcomed by the Mexicans with bloody hands and hospitable graves; then it was that Ashmun and Lincoln voted in the House of Representatives that the war was unconstitutional and unjust; and Ashmun's resolution, Corwin's speech, and Lincoln's vote were sent to Mexico and read at the head of the Mexican army, to prove to them that there was a Mexican party in the Congress of the United States who were doing all in their power to aid them. ["That's the truth;" "Lincoln is a traitor," etc.] That a man who takes sides with the common enemy against his own country in time of war should rejoice in a war being made on me now, is very natural. [Immense applause.] And, in my opinion, no other kind of a man would rejoice in it. ["That's true;" "Hurrah for Douglas," and cheers.]...

Mr. Lincoln tries to avoid the main issue by attacking the truth of my proposition, that our fathers made this government divided into Free and Slave States, recognizing the right of each to decide all its local questions for itself. Did they not thus make it? It is true that they did not establish slavery in any of the States, or abolish it in any of them; but finding thirteen States, twelve of which were Slave and one Free, they agreed to form a government uniting them together as they stood, divided into Free and Slave States, and to guarantee forever to each State the right to do as it pleased on the slavery question. [Cheers.] Having thus made the government and conferred this right upon each State forever, I assert that this Government can exist as they made it, divided into Free and Slave States, if any one State chooses to retain slavery. [Cheers.] He says that he looks forward to a time when slavery shall be abolished everywhere. I look forward to a time when each State shall be allowed to do as it pleases. If it chooses to keep slavery forever, it is not my business, but its own; if it chooses to abolish slavery, it is its own business,—not mine. I care more for the great principle of self-government, the right of the people to rule, than I do for all the negroes in Christendom. [Cheers.] I would not



endanger the perpetuity of this Union, I would not blot out the great inalienable rights of the white men, for all the negroes that ever existed. [Renewed applause.]

...Mr. Lincoln went on to tell you that he does not at all desire to interfere with slavery in the States where it exists, nor does his party. I expected him to say that down here. [Laughter.] Let me ask him, then, how he expects to put slavery in the course of ultimate extinction everywhere, if he does not intend to interfere with it in the States where it exists? [Renewed laughter.]... His idea is that he will prohibit slavery in all the Territories, and thus force them all to become Free States, surrounding the Slave States with a cordon of Free States, and hemming them in, keeping the slaves confined to their present limits whilst they go on multiplying, until the soil on which they live will no longer feed them, and he will thus be able to put slavery in a course of ultimate extinction by starvation. [Cheers.] He will extinguish slavery in the Southern States as the French general exterminated the Algerines when he smoked them out. He is going to extinguish slavery by surrounding the Slave States, hemming in the slaves, and starving them out of existence, as you smoke a fox out of his hole.

He intends to do that in the name of humanity and Christianity, in order that we may get rid of the terrible crime and sin entailed upon our fathers of holding slaves. [Laughter and cheers.] Mr. Lincoln makes out

that line of policy, and appeals to the moral sense of Justice and to the Christian feeling of the community to sustain him.

...All you have a right to ask is that the people shall do as they please: if they want slavery, let them have it; if they do not want it, allow them to refuse to encourage it.

My friends, if, as I have said before, we will only live up to this great fundamental principle, there will be peace between the North and the South. Mr. Lincoln admits that, under the Constitution, on all domestic questions, except slavery, we ought not to interfere with the people of each State. What right have we to interfere with slavery any more than we have to interfere with any other question? He says that this slavery question is now the bone of contention. Why? Simply because agitators have combined in all the Free States to make war upon it. Suppose the agitators in the States should combine in one half of the Union to make war upon the railroad system of the other half? They would thus be driven to the same sectional strife. Suppose one section makes war upon any other peculiar institution of the opposite section, and the same strife is produced. The only remedy and safety is that we shall stand by the Constitution as our fathers made it, obey the laws as they are passed, while they stand the proper test, and sustain the decisions of the Supreme Court and the constituted authorities.

## 24

# *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861)*

H A R R I E T J A C O B S

This personal account of growing up as a female slave cuts right to the heart of one of the least discussed characteristics of slavery: rape. Everyone seemed to know, yet no one wanted to admit, that white masters regularly raped their slaves. One of the few narratives of slavery published by a woman in the antebellum period, Jacob's book appeared in the last weeks before the Civil War.

### Questions to Consider

- If a slave was indeed property, what could keep a master from having sex with his property?
- Was Jacobs appealing to common cultural values in her narrative?

## V. The Trials of Girlhood

During the first years of my service in Dr. Flint's family, I was accustomed to share some indulgences with the children of my mistress. Though this seemed to me no more than right, I was grateful for it, and tried to merit the kindness by the faithful discharge of my duties. But I now entered on my fifteenth year—a sad epoch in the life of a slave girl. My master began to whisper foul words in my ear. Young as I was, I could not remain ignorant of their import.

I tried to treat them with indifference or contempt. The master's age, my extreme youth, and the fear that his conduct would be reported to my grandmother, made him bear this treatment for many months. He was a crafty man, and resorted to many means to accomplish his purposes. Sometimes he had stormy, terrific ways, that made his victims tremble; sometimes he assumed a gentleness that he thought must surely subdue. Of the two, I preferred his stormy moods, although they left me trembling. He tried his utmost to corrupt the pure principles my grandmother had instilled. He peopled my young mind with unclean images, such as only a vile monster could think of. I turned from him with disgust and hatred.

But he was my master. I was compelled to live under the same roof with him—where I saw a man forty years my senior daily violating the most sacred commandments of nature. He told me I was his property; that I must be subject to his will in all things. My soul revolted against the mean tyranny. But where could I turn for protection? No matter whether the slave girl be as black as ebony or as fair as her mistress. In either case, there is no shadow of law to protect her from insult, from violence, or even from death; all these are inflicted by fiends who bear the shape of men. The mistress, who ought to protect the helpless victim, has no other feelings towards her but those of jealousy and rage. The degradation, the wrongs, the vices, that grow out of slavery, are more than I can describe. They are greater than you would willingly believe. Surely, if you credited one half the truths that are told you concerning the

helpless millions suffering in this cruel bondage, you at the north would not help to tighten the yoke. You surely would refuse to do for the master, on your own soil, the mean and cruel work which trained bloodhounds and the lowest class of whites do for him at the south.

Everywhere the years bring to all enough of sin and sorrow; but in slavery the very dawn of life is darkened by these shadows. Even the little child, who is accustomed to wait on her mistress and her children, will learn, before she is twelve years old, why it is that her mistress hates such and such a one among the slaves. Perhaps the child's own mother is among those hated ones. She listens to violent outbreaks of jealous passion, and cannot help understanding what is the cause. She will become prematurely knowing in evil things. Soon she will learn to tremble when she hears her master's footfall. She will be compelled to realize that she is no longer a child. If God has bestowed beauty upon her, it will prove her greatest curse. That which commands admiration in the white woman only hastens the degradation of the female slave. I know that some are too much brutalized by slavery to feel the humiliation of their position; but many slaves feel it most acutely, and shrink from the memory of it. I cannot tell how much I suffered in the presence of these wrongs, nor how I am still pained by the retrospect.

My master met me at every turn, reminding me that I belonged to him, and swearing by heaven and earth that he would compel me to submit to him. If I went out for a breath of fresh air, after a day of unwearied toil, his footsteps dogged me. If I knelt by my mother's grave, his dark shadow fell on me even there. The light heart which nature had given me became heavy with sad forebodings. The other slaves in my master's house noticed the change. Many of them pitied me; but none dared to ask the cause. They had no need to inquire. They knew too well the guilty practices under that roof; and they were aware that to speak off them was an offense that never went unpunished.

I longed for some one to confide in. I would have given the world to have laid my head on my grandmother's faithful bosom, and told her all my troubles. But Dr. Flint swore he would kill me, if I was not as silent as the grave. Then, although my grandmother was all in all to me, I feared her as well as loved her. I had been accustomed to look up to her with a respect

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Source: Harriet Jacobs with L. Maria Child, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Boston, 1861), pp. 44–81.



bordering upon awe. I was very young, and felt shame-faced about telling her such impure things, especially as I knew her to be very strict on such subjects. Moreover, she was a woman of a high spirit. She was usually very quiet in her demeanor; but if her indignation was once roused, it was not very easily quelled. I had been told that she once chased a white gentleman with a loaded pistol, because he insulted one of her daughters. I dreaded the consequences of a violent outbreak; and both pride and fear kept me silent. But though I did not confide in my grandmother, and even evaded her vigilant watchfulness and inquiry, her presence in the neighborhood was some protection to me. Though she had been a slave, Dr. Flint was afraid of her. He dreaded her scorching rebukes. Moreover, she was known and patronized by many people; and he did not wish to have his villany made public. It was lucky for me that I did not live on a distant plantation, but in a town not so large that the inhabitants were ignorant of each other's affairs. Bad as are the laws and customs in a slaveholding community, the doctor, as a professional man, deemed it prudent to keep up some outward show of decency.

O, what days and nights of fear and sorrow that man caused me! Reader, it is not to awaken sympathy for myself that I am telling you truthfully what I suffered in slavery. I do it to kindle a flame of compassion in your hearts for my sisters who are still in bondage, suffering as I once suffered.

I once saw two beautiful children playing together. One was a fair white child; the other was her slave, and also her sister. When I saw them embracing each other, and heard their joyous laughter, I turned sadly away from the lovely sight. I foresaw the inevitable blight that would fall on the little slave's heart. I knew how soon her laughter would be changed to sighs. The fair child grew up to be a still fairer woman. From childhood to womanhood her pathway was blooming with flowers, and overarched by a sunny sky. Scarcely one day of her life had been clouded when the sun rose on her happy bridal morning.

How had those years dealt with her slave sister, the little playmate of her childhood? She, also, was very beautiful; but the flowers and sunshine of love were not for her. She drank the cup of Sin, and shame, and misery, whereof her persecuted race are compelled to drink.

In view of these things, why are ye silent, ye free men and women of the north? Why do your tongues falter in maintenance of the right? Would that I had more ability! But my heart is so full, and my pen is so weak! There are noble men and worsen who plead for us, striving to help those who cannot help themselves. God bless them! God give them strength and courage to go

on! God bless those, every where, who are laboring to advance the cause of humanity!

## VI. The Jealous Mistress

I would ten thousand times rather that my children should be the half-starved paupers of Ireland than to be the most pampered among the slaves of America. I would rather drudge out my life on a cotton plantation, till the grave opened to give me rest, than to live with an unprincipled master and a jealous mistress. The felon's home in a penitentiary is preferable. He may repent, and turn from the error of his ways, and so find peace; but it is not so with a favorite slave. She is not allowed to have any pride of character. It is deemed a crime in her to wish to be virtuous.

Mrs. Flint possessed the key to her husband's character before I was born. She might have used this knowledge to counsel and to screen the young and the innocent among her slaves; but for them she had no sympathy. They were the objects of her constant suspicion and malevolence. She watched her husband with unceasing vigilance; but he was well practiced in means to evade it. What he could not find opportunity to say in words he manifested in signs. He invented more than were ever thought of in a deaf and dumb asylum. I let them pass, as if I did not understand what he meant; and many were the curses and threats bestowed on me for my stupidity. One day he caught me teaching myself to write. He frowned, as if he was not well pleased: but I suppose he came to the conclusion that such an accomplishment might help to advance his favorite scheme. Before long, notes were often slipped into my hand. I would return them, saying, "I can't read them, sir." "Can't you?" he replied; "then I must read them to you." He always finished the reading by asking, "Do you understand?" Sometimes he would complain of the heat of the tea room, and order his supper to be placed on a small table in the piazza. He would seat himself there with a well-satisfied smile, and tell me to stand by and brush away the flies. He would eat very slowly, pausing between the mouthfuls. These intervals were employed in describing the happiness I was so foolishly throwing away, and in threatening me with the penalty that finally awaited my stubborn disobedience. He boasted much of the forbearance he had exercised towards me, and reminded me that there was a limit to his patience. When I succeeded in avoiding opportunities for him to talk to me at home, I was ordered to come to his office, to do some errand. When there, I was obliged to stand and listen to such language as he saw fit to address to me. Sometimes I so openly expressed my contempt for him that he would become violently enraged, and I wondered why he did not strike me.

Circumstanced as he was, he probably thought it was better policy to be forbearing. But the state of things grew worse and worse daily. In desperation I told him that I must and would apply to my grandmother for protection. He threatened me with death, and worse than death, if I made any complaint to her. Strange to say, I did not despair. I was naturally of a buoyant disposition, and always I had a hope of somehow getting out of his clutches. Like many a poor, simple slave before me, I trusted that some threads of joy would yet be woven into my dark destiny.

I had entered my sixteenth year, and every day it became more apparent that my presence was intolerable to Mrs. Flint. Angry words frequently passed between her and her husband. He had never punished me himself, and he would not allow any body else to punish me. In that respect, she was never satisfied; but, in her angry moods, no terms were too vile for her to bestow upon me. Yet I, whom she detested so bitterly, had far more pity for her than he had, whose duty it was to make her life happy. I never wronged her, or wished to wrong her; and one word of kindness from her would have brought me to her feet.

After repeated quarrels between the doctor and his wife, he announced his intention to take his youngest daughter, then four years old, to sleep in his apartment. It was necessary that a servant should sleep in the same room, to be on hand if the child stirred. I was selected for that office, and informed for what purpose that arrangement had been made. By managing to keep within sight of people, as much as possible, during the day time, I had hitherto succeeded in eluding my master, though a razor was often held to my throat to force me to change this line of policy. At night I slept by the side of my great aunt, where I felt safe. He was too prudent to come into her room. She was an old woman, and had been in the family many years. Moreover, as a married man, and a professional man, he deemed it necessary to save appearances in some degree. But he resolved to remove the obstacle in the way of his scheme; and he thought he had planned it so that he should evade suspicion. He was well aware how much I prized my refuge by the side of my old aunt, and he determined to dispossess me of it. The first night the doctor had the little child in his room alone. The next morning, I was ordered to take my station as nurse the following night. A kind Providence interposed in my favor. During the day Mrs. Flint heard of this new arrangement, and a storm followed. I rejoiced to hear it rage.

After a while my mistress sent for me to come to her room. Her first question was, "Did you know you were to sleep in the doctor's room?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Who told you?"

"My master."

"Will you answer truly all the questions I ask?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Tell me, then, as you hope to be forgiven, are you innocent of what I have accused you?"

"I am."

She handed me a Bible, and said, "Lay your hand on your heart, kiss this holy book, and swear before God that you tell me the truth."

I took the oath she required, and I did it with a clear conscience.

"You have taken God's holy word to testify your innocence," said she. "If you have deceived me, beware! Now take this stool, sit down, look me directly in the face, and tell me all that has passed between your master and you."

I did as she ordered. As I went on with my account her color changed frequently, she wept, and sometimes groaned. She spoke in tones so sad, that I was touched by her grief. The tears came to my eyes; but I was soon convinced that her emotions arose from anger and wounded pride. She felt that her marriage vows were desecrated, her dignity insulted; but she had no compassion for the poor victim of her husband's perfidy. She pitied herself as a martyr; but she was incapable of feeling for the condition of shame and misery in which her unfortunate, helpless slave was placed.

Yet perhaps she had some touch of feeling for me; for when the conference was ended, she spoke kindly, and promised to protect me. I should have been much comforted by this assurance if I could have had confidence in it; but my experiences in slavery had filled me with distrust. She was not a very refined woman, and had not much control over her passions. I was an object of her jealousy, and, consequently, of her hatred; and I knew I could not expect kindness or confidence from her under the circumstances in which I was placed. I could not blame her. Slaveholders' wives feel as other women would under similar circumstances. The fire of her temper kindled from small sparks, and now the flame became so intense that the doctor was obliged to give up his intended arrangement.

I knew I had ignited the torch, and I expected to suffer for it afterwards; but I felt too thankful to my mistress for the timely aid she rendered me to care much about that. She now took me to sleep in a room adjoining her own. There I was an object of her especial care, though not of her especial comfort, for she spent many a sleepless night to watch over me. Sometimes I woke up, and found her bending over me. At other times she whispered in my ear, as though it was her husband who was speaking to me, and listened to hear what I would answer. If she startled me, on such occasions, she would glide stealthily away; and the next morning she would tell me I had been talking in my sleep, and ask



who I was talking to. At last, I began to be fearful for my life. It had been often threatened; and you can imagine, better than I can describe, what an unpleasant sensation it must produce to wake up in the dead of night and find a jealous woman bending over you. Terrible as this experience was, I had fears that it would give place to one more terrible.

My mistress grew weary of her vigils; they did not prove satisfactory. She changed her tactics. She now tried the trick of accusing my master of crime, in my presence, and gave my name as the author of the accusation. To my utter astonishment, he replied, "I don't believe it; but if she did acknowledge it, you tortured her into exposing me." Tortured into exposing him! Truly, Satan had no difficulty in distinguishing the color of his soul! I understood his object in making this false representation. It was to show me that I gained nothing by seeking the protection of my mistress; that the power was still all in his own hands. I pitied Mrs. Flint. She was a second wife, many years the junior of her husband; and the hoaryheaded miscreant was enough to try the patience of a wiser and better woman. She was completely foiled, and knew not how to proceed. She would gladly have had me flogged for my supposed false oath; but, as I have already stated, the doctor never allowed any one to whip me. The old sinner was politic. The application of the lash might have led to remarks that would have exposed him in the eyes of his children and grandchildren. How often did I rejoice that I lived in a town where all the inhabitants knew each other! If I had been on a remote plantation, or lost among the multitude of a crowded city, I should not be a living woman at this day.

The secrets of slavery are concealed like those of the Inquisition. My master was, to my knowledge, the father of eleven slaves. But did the mothers dare to tell who was the father of their children? Did the other slaves dare to allude to it, except in whispers among themselves? No, indeed! They knew too well the terrible consequences.

My grandmother could not avoid seeing things which excited her suspicions. She was uneasy about me, and tried various ways to buy me; but the never-changing answer was always repeated: "Linda does not belong to me. She is my daughter's property, and I have no legal right to sell her." The conscientious man! He was too scrupulous to sell me; but he had no scruples whatever about committing a much greater wrong against the helpless young girl placed under his guardianship, as his daughter's property. Sometimes my persecutor would ask me whether I would like to be sold. I told him I would rather be sold to any body than to lead such a life as I did. On such occasions he would assume the air of a very injured individual, and reproach me for my ingratitude. "Did I not take you into

the house, and make you the companion of my own children?" he would say. "Have I ever treated you like a negro? I have never allowed you to be punished, not even to please your mistress. And this is the recompense I get, you ungrateful girl!" I answered that he had reasons of his own for screening me from punishment, and that the course he pursued made my mistress hate me and persecute me. If I wept, he would say, "Poor child! Don't cry! don't cry! I will make peace for you with your mistress. Only let me arrange matters in my own way. Poor, foolish girl! you don't know what is for your own good. I would cherish you. I would make a lady of you. Now go, and think of all I have promised you."

I did think of it.

Reader, I draw no imaginary pictures of southern homes. I am telling you the plain truth. Yet when victims make their escape from this wild beast of Slavery, northerners consent to act the part of bloodhounds, and hunt the poor fugitive back into his den, "full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness." Nay, more, they are not only willing, but proud, to give their daughters in marriage to slaveholders. The poor girls have romantic notions of a sunny clime, and of the flowering vines that all the year round shade a happy home. To what disappointments are they destined! The young wife soon learns that the husband in whose hands she has placed her happiness pays no regard to his marriage vows. Children of every shade of complexion play with her own fair babies, and too well she knows that they are born unto him of his own household. Jealousy and hatred enter the flowery home, and it is ravaged of its loveliness.

Southern women often marry a man knowing that he is the father of many little slaves. They do not trouble themselves about it. They regard such children as property, as marketable as the pigs on the plantation; and it is seldom that they do not make them aware of this by passing them into the slavetrader's hands as soon as possible, and thus getting them out of their sight. I am glad to say there are some honorable exceptions.

I have myself known two southern wives who exhorted their husbands to free those slaves towards whom they stood in a "parental relation;" and their request was granted. These husbands blushed before the superior nobleness of their wives' natures. Though they had only counselled them to do that which it was their duty to do, it commanded their respect, and rendered their conduct more exemplary. Concealment was at an end, and confidence took the place of distrust.

Though this bad institution deadens the moral sense, even in white women, to a fearful extent, it is not altogether extinct. I have heard southern ladies say of Mr. Such a one, "He not only thinks it no disgrace to be the father of those little niggers, but he is not ashamed to

call himself their master. I declare, such things ought not to be tolerated in any decent society!"

## VII. The Lover

Why does the slave ever love? Why allow the tendrils of the heart to twine around objects which may at any moment be wrenched away by the hand of violence? When separations come by the hand of death, the pious soul can bow in resignation, and say, "Not my will, but thine be done, O Lord!" But when the ruthless hand of man strikes the blow, regardless of the misery he causes, it is hard to be submissive. I did not reason thus when I was a young girl. Youth will be youth. I loved, and I indulged the hope that the dark clouds around me would turn out a bright lining. I forgot that in the land of my birth the shadows are too dense for light to penetrate. A land

Where laughter is not mirth; nor thought the mind;  
Nor words a language; nor even men mankind.  
Where cries reply to curses, shrieks to blows,  
And each is tortured in his separate hell.

There was in the neighborhood a young colored carpenter; a free born man. We had been well acquainted in childhood, and frequently met together afterwards. We became mutually attached, and he proposed to marry me. I loved him with all the ardor of a young girl's first love. But when I reflected that I was a slave, and that the laws gave no sanction to the marriage of such, my heart sank within me. My lover wanted to buy me; but I knew that Dr. Flint was too wilful and arbitrary a man to consent to that arrangement. From him, I was sure of experiencing all sorts of opposition, and I had nothing to hope from my mistress. She would have been delighted to have got rid of me, but not in that way. It would have relieved her mind of a burden if she could have seen me sold to some distant state, but if I was married near home I should be just as much in her husband's power as I had previously been—for the husband of a slave has no power to protect her. Moreover, my mistress, like many others, seemed to think that slaves had no right to any family ties of their own; that they were created merely to wait upon the family of the mistress. I once heard her abuse a young slave girl, who told her that a colored man wanted to make her his wife. "I will have you peeled and pickled, my lady," said she, "if I ever hear you mention that subject again. Do you suppose that I will have you tending my children with the children of that nigger?" The girl to whom she said this had a mulatto child, of course not acknowledged by its father. The poor black man who loved her would have been proud to acknowledge this helpless offspring.

Many and anxious were the thoughts I revolved in my mind. I was at a loss what to do. Above all things, I was desirous to spare my lover the insults that had cut so deeply into my own soul. I talked with my grandmother about it, and partly told her my fears. I did not dare to tell her the worst. She had long suspected all was not right, and if I confirmed her suspicions I knew a storm would rise that would prove the overthrow of all my hopes.

This love-dream had been my support through many trials; and I could not bear to run the risk of having it suddenly dissipated. There was a lady in the neighborhood, a particular friend of Dr. Flint's, who often visited the house. I had a great respect for her, and she had always manifested a friendly interest in me. Grandmother thought she would have great influence with the doctor. I went to this lady, and told her my story. I told her I was aware that my lover's being a free-born man would prove a great objection; but he wanted to buy me; and if Dr. Flint would consent to that arrangement, I felt sure he would be willing to pay any reasonable price. She knew that Mrs. Flint disliked me; therefore, I ventured to suggest that perhaps my mistress would approve of my being sold, as that would rid her of me. The lady listened with kindly sympathy, and promised to do her utmost to promote my wishes. She had an interview with the doctor, and I believe she pleaded my cause earnestly; but it was all to no purpose.

How I dreaded my master now! Every minute I expected to be summoned to his presence; but the day passed, and I heard nothing from him. The next morning, a message was brought to me: "Master wants you in his study." I found the door ajar and I stood a moment gazing at the hateful man who claimed a right to rule me, body and soul. I entered and tried to appear calm. I did not want him to know how my heart was bleeding. He looked fixedly at me, with an expression which seemed to say, "I have half a mind to kill you on the spot." At last he broke the silence, and that was a relief to both of us.

"So you want to be married, do you?" said he, "and to a free nigger."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I'll soon convince you whether I am your master, or the nigger fellow you honor so highly. If you must have a husband, you may take up with one of my slaves."

What a situation I should be in, as the wife of one of his slaves, even if my heart had been interested!

I replied, "Don't you suppose, sir, that a slave can have some preference about marrying? Do you suppose that all men are alike to her?"

"Do you love this nigger?" said he, abruptly.

"Yes, sir."



"How dare you tell me so!" he exclaimed, in great wrath. After a slight pause, he added, "I supposed you thought more of yourself; that you felt above the insults of such puppies."

I replied, "If he is a puppy I am a puppy for we are both of the negro race. It is right and honorable for us to love each other. The man you call a puppy never insulted me, sir; and he would not love me if he did not believe me to be a virtuous woman."

He sprang upon me like a tiger, and gave me a stunning blow. It was the first time he had ever struck me; and fear did not enable me to control my anger. When I had recovered a little from the effects, I exclaimed, "You have struck me for answering you honestly. How I despise you!"

There was silence for some minutes. Perhaps he was deciding what should be my punishment; or, perhaps, he wanted to give me time to reflect on what I had said, and to whom I had said it. Finally, he asked, "Do you know what you have said?"

"Yes, sir; but your treatment drove me to it."

"Do you know that I have a right to do as I like with you—that I can kill you, if I please?"

"You have tried to kill me, and I wish you had; but you have no right to do as you like with me."

"Silence!" he exclaimed, in a thundering voice. "By heavens, girl, you forget yourself too far! Are you mad? If you are, I will soon bring you to your senses. Do you think any other master would bear what I have borne from you this morning? Many masters would have killed you on the spot. How would you like to be sent to jail for your insolence?"

"I know I have been disrespectful, sir," I replied; "but you drove me to it; I couldn't help it. As for the jail, there would be more peace for me there than there is here."

"You deserve to go there," said he, "and to be under such treatment, that you would forget the meaning of the word peace. It would do you good. It would take some of your high notions out of you. But I am not ready to send you there yet, notwithstanding your ingratitude for all my kindness and forbearance. You have been the plague of my life. I have wanted to make you happy, and I have been repaid with the basest ingratitude; but though you have proved yourself incapable of appreciating my kindness, I will be lenient towards you, Linda. I will give you one more chance to redeem your character. If you behave yourself and do as I require, I will forgive you and treat you as I always have done; but if you disobey me, I will punish you as I would the meanest slave on my plantation. Never let me hear that fellow's name mentioned again. If I ever know of your speaking to him, I will cowhide you both; and if I catch him lurking about my premises, I will shoot him as soon as I would a dog. Do you hear what

I say? I'll teach you a lesson about marriage and free niggers! Now go, and let this be the last time I have occasion to speak to you on this subject."

Reader, did you ever hate? I hope not. I never did but once; and I trust I never shall again. Somebody has called it "the atmosphere of hell;" and I believe it is so.

For a fortnight the doctor did not speak to me. He thought to mortify me; to make me feel that I had disgraced myself by receiving the honorable addresses of a respectable colored man, in preference to the base proposals of a white man. But though his lips disdained to address me, his eyes were very loquacious. No animal ever watched its prey more narrowly than he watched me. He knew that I could write, though he had failed to make me read his letters; and he was now troubled lest I should exchange letters with another man. After a while he became weary of silence; and I was sorry for it. One morning, as he passed through the hall, to leave the house, he contrived to thrust a note into my hand. I thought I had better read it, and spare myself the vexation of having him read it to me. It expressed regret for the blow he had given me, and reminded me that I myself was wholly to blame for it. He hoped I had become convinced of the injury I was doing myself by incurring his displeasure. He wrote that he had made up his mind to go to Louisiana; that he should take several slaves with him, and intended I should be one of the number. My mistress would remain where she was; therefore I should have nothing to fear from that quarter. If I merited kindness from him, he assured me that it would be lavishly bestowed. He begged me to think over the matter, and answer the following day.

The next morning I was called to carry a pair of scissors to his room. I laid them on the table, with the letter beside them. He thought it was my answer, and did not call me back. I went as usual to attend my young mistress to and from school. He met me in the street, and ordered me to stop at his office on my way back. When I entered, he showed me his letter, and asked me why I had not answered it. I replied, "I am your daughter's property, and it is in your power to send me, or take me, wherever you please." He said he was very glad to find me so willing to go, and that we should start early in the autumn. He had a large practice in the town, and I rather thought he had made up the story merely to frighten me. However that might be, I was determined that I would never go to Louisiana with him.

Summer passed away, and early in the autumn Dr. Flint's eldest son was sent to Louisiana to examine the country, with a view to emigrating. That news did not disturb me. I knew very well that I should not be sent with him. That I had not been taken to the plantation before this time, was owing to the fact that his son was there. He was jealous of his son; and jealousy of the overseer had kept him from punishing me by sending

me into the fields to work. Is it strange that I was not proud of these protectors? As for the overseer, he was a man for whom I had less respect than I had for a bloodhound.

Young Mr. Flint did not bring back a favorable report of Louisiana, and I heard no more of that scheme. Soon after this, my lover met me at the corner of the street, and I stopped to speak to him. Looking up, I saw my master watching us from his window. I hurried home, trembling with fear. I was sent for, immediately, to go to his room. He met me with a blow. "When is mistress to be married?" said he, in a sneering tone. A shower of oaths and imprecations followed. How thankful I was that my lover was a free man! that my tyrant had no power to flog him for speaking to me in the street!

Again and again I revolved in my mind how all this would end. There was no hope that the doctor would consent to sell me on any terms. He had an iron will, and was determined to keep me, and to conquer me. My lover was an intelligent and religious man. Even if he could have obtained permission to marry me while I was a slave, the marriage would give him no power to protect me from my master. It would have made him miserable to witness the insults I should have been subjected to. And then, if we had children, I knew they must "follow the condition of the mother." What a terrible blight that would be on the heart of a free, intelligent father! For his sake, I felt that I ought not to link his fate with my own unhappy destiny. He was going to Savannah to see about a little property left him by an uncle; and hard as it was to bring my feelings to it, I earnestly entreated him not to come back. I advised him to go to the Free States, where his tongue would not be tied, and where his intelligence would be of more avail to him. He left me, still hoping the day would come when I could be bought. With me the lamp of hope had gone out. The dream of my girlhood was over. I felt lonely and desolate.

Still I was not stripped of all. I still had my good grandmother, and my affectionate brother. When he put his arms round my neck, and looked into my eyes, as if to read there the troubles I dared not tell, I felt that I still had something to love. But even that pleasant emotion was chilled by the reflection that he might be torn from me at any moment, by some sudden freak of my master. If he had known how we loved each other, I think he would have exulted in separating us. We often planned together how we could get to the north. But, as William remarked, such things are easier said than done. My movements were very closely watched, and we had no means of getting any money to defray our expenses. As for grandmother, she was strongly opposed to her children's undertaking any such project. She had not for-

gotten poor Benjamin's sufferings, and she was afraid that if another child tried to escape, he would have a similar or a worse fate. To me, nothing seemed more dreadful than my present life. I said to myself, "William must be free. He shall go to the north, and I will follow him." Many a slave sister has formed the same plans.

## VIII. What Slaves Are Taught to Think of the North

Slaveholders pride themselves upon being honorable men; but if you were to hear the enormous lies they tell their slaves, you would have small respect for their veracity. I have spoken plain English. Pardon me. I cannot use a milder term. When they visit the north, and return home, they tell their slaves of the runaways they have seen, and describe them to be in the most deplorable condition. A slaveholder once told me that he had seen a runaway friend of mine in New York, and that she besought him to take her back to her master, for she was literally dying of starvation; that many days she had only one cold potato to eat, and at other times could get nothing at all. He said he refused to take her, because he knew her master would not thank him for bringing such a miserable wretch to his house. He ended by saying to me, "This is the punishment she brought on herself for running away from a kind master."

This whole story was false. I afterwards staid with that friend in New York, and found her in comfortable circumstances. She had never thought of such a thing as wishing to go back to slavery. Many of the slaves believe such stories, and think it is not worth while to exchange slavery for such a hard kind of freedom. It is difficult to persuade such that freedom could make them useful men, and enable them to protect their wives and children. If those heathen in our Christian land had as much teaching as some Hindoos, they would think otherwise. They would know that liberty is more valuable than life. They would begin to understand their own capabilities, and exert themselves to become men and women.

But while the Free States sustain a law which hurls fugitives back into slavery, how can the slaves resolve to become men? There are some who strive to protect wives and daughters from the insults of their masters; but those who have such sentiments have had advantages above the general mass of slaves. They have been partially civilized and Christianized by favorable circumstances. Some are bold enough to utter such sentiments to their masters. O, that there were more of them!

Some poor creatures have been so brutalized by the lash that they will sneak out of the way to give their



masters free access to their wives and daughters. Do you think this proves the black man to belong to an inferior order of beings? What would you be, if you had been born and brought up a slave, with generations of slaves for ancestors? I admit that the black man is inferior. But what is it that makes him so? It is the ignorance in which white men compel him to live; it is the torturing whip that lashes manhood out of him; it is the fierce bloodhounds of the South, and the scarcely less cruel human bloodhounds of the north, who enforce the Fugitive Slave Law. They do the work.

Southern gentlemen indulge in the most contemptuous expressions about the Yankees, while they, on their part, consent to do the vilest work for them, such as the ferocious bloodhounds and the despised negro-hunters are employed to do at home. When southerners go to the north, they are proud to do them honor; but the northern man is not welcome south of Mason and Dixon's line, unless he suppresses every thought and feeling at variance with their "peculiar institution." Nor is it enough to be silent. The masters are not pleased, unless they obtain a greater degree of subservience than that; and they are generally accommodated. Do they respect the northerner for this? I [know] not. Even the slaves despise "a northern man with southern principles;" and that is the class they generally see. When northerners go to the south to reside, they prove very apt scholars. They soon imbibe the sentiments and disposition of their neighbors, and generally go beyond their teachers. Of the two, they are proverbially the hardest masters.

They seem to satisfy their consciences with the doctrine that God created the Africans to be slaves. What a libel upon the heavenly Father, who "made of one blood all nations of men!" And then who are Africans? Who can measure the amount of Anglo-Saxon blood coursing in the veins of American slaves?

I have spoken of the pains slaveholders take to give their slaves a bad opinion of the north; but, notwithstanding this, intelligent slaves are aware that they have many friends in the Free States. Even the most ignorant have some confused notions about it. They knew that I could read; and I was often asked if I had seen any thing in the newspapers about white folks over in the big north, who were trying to get their freedom for them. Some believe that the abolitionists have already made them free, and that it is established by law, but that their masters prevent the law from going into effect. One woman begged me to get a newspaper and read it over. She said her husband told her that the black people had sent word to the queen of 'Merica that they were all slaves; that she didn't believe it, and went to Washington city to see the president about it. They

quarrelled; she drew her sword upon him, and swore that he should help her to make them all free.

That poor, ignorant woman thought that America was governed by a Queen, to whom the President was subordinate. I wish the President was subordinate to Queen Justice.

## IX. Sketches of Neighboring Slaveholders

There was a planter in the country, not far from us, whom I will call Mr. Litch. He was an ill-bred, uneducated man, but very wealthy. He had six hundred slaves, many of whom he did not know by sight. His extensive plantation was managed by well-paid overseers. There was a jail and a whipping post on his grounds; and whatever cruelties were perpetrated there, they passed without comment. He was so effectually screened by his great wealth that he was called to no account for his crimes, not even for murder.

Various were the punishments resorted to. A favorite one was to tie a rope round a man's body, and suspend him from the ground. A fire was kindled over him, from which was suspended a piece of fat pork. As this cooked, the scalding drops of fat continually fell on the bare flesh. On his own plantation, he required very strict obedience to the eighth commandment. But depredations on the neighbors were allowable, provided the culprit managed to evade detection or suspicion. If a neighbor brought a charge of theft against any of his slaves, he was browbeaten by the master, who assured him that his slaves had enough of every thing at home, and had no inducement to steal. No sooner was the neighbor's back turned, than the accused was sought out, and whipped for his lack of discretion. If a slave stole from him even a pound of meat or a peck of corn, if detection followed, he was put in chains and imprisoned, and so kept till his form was attenuated by hunger and suffering.

A freshet once bore his wine cellar and meat house miles away from the plantation. Some slaves followed, and secured bits of meat and bottles of wine. Two were detected; a ham and some liquor being found in their huts. They were summoned by their master. No words were used, but a club felled them to the ground. A rough box was their coffin, and their interment was a dog's burial. Nothing was said.

Murder was so common on his plantation that he feared to be alone after nightfall. He might have believed in ghosts.

His brother, if not equal in wealth, was at least equal in cruelty. His bloodhounds were well trained. Their pen was spacious, and a terror to the slaves. They were

let loose on a runaway, and, if they tracked him, they literally tore the flesh from his bones. When this slaveholder died, his shrieks and groans were so frightful that they appalled his own friends. His last words were, "I am going to hell; bury my money with me."

After death his eyes remained open. To press the lids down, silver dollars were laid on them. These were buried with him. From this circumstance, a rumor went abroad that his coffin was filled with money. Three times his grave was opened, and his coffin taken out. The last time, his body was found on the ground, and a flock of buzzards were pecking at it. He was again interred, and a sentinel set over his grave. The perpetrators were never discovered.

Cruelty is contagious in uncivilized communities. Mr. Conant, a neighbor of Mr. Litch, returned from town one evening in a partial state of intoxication. His body servant gave him some offense. He was divested of his clothes, except his shirt, whipped, and tied to a large tree in front of the house. It was a stormy night in winter. The wind blew bitterly cold, and the boughs of the old tree crackled under falling sleet. A member of the family, fearing he would freeze to death, begged that he might be taken down; but the master would not relent. He remained there three hours; and, when he was cut down, he was more dead than alive. Another slave, who stole a pig from this master, to appease his hunger, was terribly flogged. In desperation, he tried to run away. But at the end of two miles, he was so faint with loss of blood, he thought he was dying. He had a wife, and he longed to see her once more. Too sick to walk, he crept back that long distance on his hands and knees. When he reached his master's, it was night. He had not strength to rise and open the gate. He moaned, and tried to call for help. I had a friend living in the same family. At last his cry reached her. She went out and found the prostrate man at the gate. She ran back to the house for assistance, and two men returned with her. They carried him in, and laid him on the floor. The back of his shirt was one clot of blood. By means of lard, my friend loosened it from the raw flesh. She bandaged him, gave him cool drink, and left him to rest. The master said he deserved a hundred more lashes. When his own labor was stolen from him, he had stolen food to appease his hunger. This was his crime.

Another neighbor was a Mrs. Wade. At no hour of the day was there cessation of the lash on her premises. Her labors began with the dawn, and did not cease till long after nightfall. The barn was her particular place of torture. There she lashed the slaves with the might of a man. An old slave of hers once said to me, "It is hell in missis's house. 'Pears I can never get out. Day and night I prays to die."

The mistress died before the old woman, and, when dying, entreated her husband not to permit any one of her slaves to look on her after death. A slave who had

nursed her children, and had still a child in her care, watched her chance, and stole with it in her arms to the room where lay her dead mistress. She gazed a while on her, then raised her hand and dealt two blows on her face, saying, as she did so, "The devil is got you now!" She forgot that the child was looking on. She had just begun to talk; and she said to her father, "I did see ma, and mammy did strike ma, so," striking her own face with her little hand. The master was startled. He could not imagine how the nurse could obtain access to the room where the corpse lay; for he kept the door locked. He questioned her. She confessed that what the child had said was true, and told how she had procured the key. She was sold to Georgia.

In my childhood I knew a valuable slave, named Charity, and loved her, as all children did. Her young mistress married, and took her to Louisiana. Her little boy, James, was sold to a good sort of master. He became involved in debt, and James was sold again to a wealthy slaveholder, noted for his cruelty. With this man he grew up to manhood, receiving the treatment of a dog. After a severe whipping, to save himself from further infliction of the lash, with which he was threatened, he took to the woods. He was in a most miserable condition—cut by the cowskin, half naked, half starved, and without the means of procuring a crust of bread.

Some weeks after his escape, he was captured, tied, and carried back to his master's plantation. This man considered punishment in his jail, on bread and water, after receiving hundreds of lashes, too mild for the poor slave's offense. Therefore he decided, after the overseer should have whipped him to his satisfaction, to have him placed between the screws of the cotton gin, to stay as long as he had been in the woods. This wretched creature was cut with the whip from his head to his feet, then washed with strong brine, to prevent the flesh from mortifying, and make it heal sooner than it otherwise would. He was then put into the cotton gin, which was screwed down, only allowing him room to turn on his side when he could not lie on his back. Every morning a slave was sent with a piece of bread and bowl of water, which were placed within reach of the poor fellow. The slave was charged, under penalty of severe punishment, not to speak to him.

Four days passed, and the slave continued to carry the bread and water. On the second morning, he found the bread gone, but the water untouched. When he had been in the press four days and five nights, the slave informed his master that the water had not been used for four mornings, and that a horrible stench came from the gin house. The overseer was sent to examine into it. When the press was unscrewed, the dead body was found partly eaten by rats and vermin. Perhaps the rats that devoured his bread had gnawed him before life was extinct. Poor Charity! Grandmother and I often



asked each other how her affectionate heart would bear the news, if she should ever hear of the murder of her son. We had known her husband, and knew that James was like him in manliness and intelligence. These were the qualities that made it so hard for him to be a plantation slave. They put him into a rough box, and buried him with less feeling than would have been manifested for an old house dog. Nobody asked any questions. He was a slave; and the feeling was that the master had a right to do what he pleased with his own property. And what did he care for the value of a slave? He had hundreds of them. When they had finished their daily toil, they must hurry to eat their little morsels, and be ready to extinguish their pine knots before nine o'clock, when the overseer went his patrol rounds. He entered every cabin, to see that men and their wives had gone to bed together, lest the men, from over-fatigue, should fall asleep in the chimney corner, and remain there till the morning hour called them to their daily task. Women are considered of no value, unless they continually increase their owner's stock. They are put on a par with animals. This same master shot a woman through the head, who had run away and been brought back to him. No one called him to account for it. If a slave resisted being whipped, the bloodhounds were unpacked, and set upon him, to tear his flesh from his bones. The master who did these things was highly educated, and styled a perfect gentleman. He also boasted the name and standing of a Christian, though Satan never had a truer follower.

I could tell of more slaveholders as cruel as those I have described. They are not exceptions to the general rules. I do not say there are no humane slaveholders. Such characters do exist, notwithstanding the hardening influences around them. But they are "like angels' visits—few and far between."

I knew a young lady who was one of these rare specimens. She was an orphan, and inherited as slaves a woman and her six children. Their father was a free man. They had a comfortable home of their own, parents and children living together. The mother and eldest daughter served their mistress during the day, and at night returned to their dwelling, which was on the premises. The young lady was very pious and there was some reality in her religion. She taught her slaves to lead pure lives, and wished them to enjoy the fruit of their own industry. Pure religion was not a garb put on for Sunday, and laid aside till Sunday returned again. The eldest daughter of the slave mother was promised in marriage to a free man; and the day before the wedding this good mistress emancipated her, in order that her marriage might have the sanction of law.

Report said that this young lady cherished an unrequited affection for a man who had resolved to marry for wealth. In the course of time a rich uncle of hers died. He left six thousand dollars to his two sons by a

colored woman, and the remainder of his property to this orphan niece. The metal soon attracted the magnet. The lady and her weighty purse became his. She offered to manumit her slaves—telling them that her marriage might make unexpected changes in their destiny, and she wished to insure their happiness. They refused to take their freedom, saying that she had always been their best friend, and they could not be so happy any where as with her. I was not surprised. I had often seen them in their comfortable home, and thought that the whole town did not contain a happier family. They had never felt slavery; and, when it was too late, they were convinced of its reality.

When the new master claimed this family as his property, the father became furious, and went to his mistress for protection. "I can do nothing for you now, Harry," said she. "I no longer have the power I had a week ago. I have succeeded in obtaining the freedom of your wife; but I cannot obtain it for your children." The unhappy father swore that nobody should take his children from him. He concealed them in the woods for some days; but they were discovered and taken. The father was put in jail, and the two oldest boys sold to Georgia. One little girl, too young to be of service to her master, was left with the wretched mother. The other three were carried to their master's plantation. The eldest soon became a mother; and, when the slaveholder's wife looked at the babe, she wept bitterly. She knew that her own husband had violated the purity she had so carefully inculcated. She had a second child by her master, and then he sold her and his offspring to his brother. She bore two children to the brother, and was sold again. The next sister went crazy. The life she was compelled to lead drove her mad. The third one became the mother of five daughters. Before the birth of the fourth the pious mistress died. To the last, she rendered every kindness to the slaves that her unfortunate circumstances permitted. She passed away peacefully, glad to close her eyes on a life which had been made so wretched by the man she loved.

This man squandered the fortune he had received, and sought to retrieve his affairs by a second marriage; but, having retired after a night of drunken debauch, he was found dead in the morning. He was called a good master; for he fed and clothed his slaves better than most masters, and the lash was not heard on his plantation so frequently as on many others. Had it not been for slavery, he would have been a better man, and his wife a happier woman.

No pen can give an adequate description of the all-pervading corruption produced by slavery. The slave girl is reared in an atmosphere of licentiousness and fear. The lash and the foul talk of her master and his sons are her teachers. When she is fourteen or fifteen, her owner, or his sons, or the overseer, or perhaps all of them, begin to bribe her with presents. If these fail to ac-

comply with their purpose, she is whipped or starved into submission to their will. She may have had religious principles inculcated by some pious mother or grandmother, or some good mistress; she may have a lover, whose good opinion and peace of mind are dear to her heart; or the profligate men who have power over her may be exceedingly odious to her. But resistance is hopeless....

The slaveholder's sons are, of course, vitiated, even while boys, by the unclean influences every where around them. Nor do the master's daughters always escape. Severe retributions sometimes come upon him for the wrongs he does to the daughters of the slaves. The white daughters early hear their parents quarrelling about some female slave. Their curiosity is excited, and they soon learn the cause. They are attended by the young slave girls whom their father has corrupted; and they hear such talk as should never meet youthful ears, or any other ears. They know that the women slaves are subject to their father's authority in all things; and in some cases they exercise the same authority over the men slaves. I have myself seen the master of such a household whose head was bowed down in shame; for it was known in the neighborhood that his daughter had selected one of the meanest slaves on his plantation to be the father of his first grandchild. She did not make her advances to her equals, nor even to her father's more intelligent servants. She selected the most brutalized, over whom her authority could be exercised with less fear of exposure. Her father, half frantic with rage,

sought to revenge himself on the offending black man; but his daughter, foreseeing the storm that would arise, had given him free papers, and sent him out of the state.

In such cases the infant is smothered, or sent where it is never seen by any who know its history. But if the white parent is the father, instead of the mother, the offspring are unblushingly reared for the market. If they are girls, I have indicated plainly enough what will be their inevitable destiny.

You may believe what I say; for I write only that whereof I know. I was twenty-one years in that cage of obscene birds. I can testify, from my own experience and observation, that slavery is a curse to the whites as well as to the blacks. It makes the white fathers cruel and sensual; the sons violent and licentious; it contaminates the daughters, and makes the wives wretched. And as for the colored race, it needs an abler pen than mine to describe the extremity of their sufferings, the depth of their degradation.

Yet few slaveholders seem to be aware of the widespread moral ruin occasioned by this wicked system. Their talk is of blighted cotton crops—not of the blight on their children's souls.

If you want to be fully convinced of the abominations of slavery, go on a southern plantation, and call yourself a negro trader. Then there will be no concealment; and you will see and hear things that will seem to you impossible among human beings with immortal souls.

## 25

# *Constitution of the Confederate States (1861)*

## CONGRESS OF THE CONFEDERATE STATES

Representatives from seven Southern states met in Montgomery, Alabama, in February 1861, to form a new government free of the nationalist flaws of their former Union. After electing Jefferson Davis president, the Montgomery Convention constituted itself the Congress of the Confederate States and wrote a Constitution. Their Constitution was essentially a revision of the existing Constitution of the United States, with a few changes to meet Southern grievances. The



Convention was most concerned that those states which had not yet seceded would have no objection to the new Constitution.

### Questions to Consider

- In what ways does the Confederate Constitution differ from that of the United States?
- Based on this document, what seem to be the key grievances against the United States government?
- Does this Constitution grant the right of secession?

sovereign states

## Constitution of the Confederate States

We, the people of the Confederate States, each State acting in its sovereign and independent character, in order to form a permanent federal government, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity—invoking the favor and guidance of Almighty God—do ordain and establish this Constitution for the Confederate States of America.

### Article I

...Sec. 2. (1) The House of Representatives shall be composed of members chosen every second year by the people of the several States; and the electors in each State shall be citizens of the Confederate States, and have the qualifications requisite for electors of the most numerous branch of the State Legislature; but no person of foreign birth, not a citizen of the Confederate States, shall be allowed to vote for any officer, civil or political, State or Federal....

(3) Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several States, which may be included within this Confederacy, according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free persons...three-fifths of all slaves....

Sec. 3. (1) The Senate of the Confederate States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen for six years by the Legislature thereof, at the regular session next immediately preceding the commencement

of the term of service; and each Senator shall have one vote....

Sec. 8. The Congress shall have power—

(1) To lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts, and excises for revenue, necessary to pay the debts, provide for the common defense, and carry on the Government of the Confederate States; but no bounties shall be granted from the Treasury; nor shall any duties or taxes on importations from foreign nations be laid to promote or foster any branch of industry; and all duties, imposts, and excises shall be uniform throughout the Confederate States....

(3) To regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several States,...but neither this, nor any other clause contained in the Constitution, shall ever be construed to delegate the power to Congress to appropriate money for any internal improvement intended to facilitate commerce....

Sec. 9. (1) The importation of negroes of the African race from any foreign country other than the slaveholding States or Territories of the United States of America, is hereby forbidden; and Congress is required to pass such laws as shall effectually prevent the same.

(2) Congress shall also have power to prohibit the introduction of slaves from any State not a member of, or Territory not belonging to, this Confederacy....

(4) No bill of attainder, *ex post facto* law, or law denying or impairing the right of property in negro slaves shall be passed....

(6) No tax or duty shall be laid on articles exported from any State, except by a vote of two-thirds of both Houses....

(12) Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and petition the Government for a redress of grievances....

(16) No person shall be...deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law; nor shall private

Source: James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Confederacy, Including the Diplomatic Correspondence, 1861–1865* (Nashville, 1906), 1: pp. 37–38, 41, 43–46, 48, 50–51.

property be taken for public use, without just compensation....

## Article II

Section 1. (1) The executive power shall be vested in a President of the Confederate States of America. He and the Vice President shall hold their offices for the term of six years; but the President shall not be reëligible....

Sec. 2. (1) The President shall be Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the Confederate States, and of the militia of the several States....

## Article IV

...Sec. 2. (1) The citizens of each State shall be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States; and shall have the right of transit and sojourn in any State of this Confederacy, with their slaves and other property; and the right of property in said slaves shall not be thereby impaired....

(3) No slave or other person held to service or labor in any State or Territory of the Confederate States, under the laws thereof, escaping or lawfully carried into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor; but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such slave belongs, or to whom such service or labor may be due....

(3) The Confederate States may acquire new territory.... In all such territory the institution of negro slavery, as it now exists in the Confederate States, shall be recognized and protected by Congress and by the Territorial government; and the inhabitants of the several Confederate States and Territories shall have the right to take to such Territory any slaves lawfully held by them in any of the States or Territories of the Confederate States.

(4) The Confederate States shall guarantee to every State that now is, or hereafter may become, a member of this Confederacy, a republican form of government; and shall protect each of them against invasion; and on application of the Legislature (or of the Executive when the Legislature is not in session) against domestic violence....

# 26

## *Slavery and the Confederacy* (1861)

A L E X A N D E R   S T E P H E N S

After the Civil War, the vice president of the Confederate States, Alexander Stephens, devoted enormous energy to arguing that secession was about states' rights, not slavery. Ironically, in January 1861, Stephens, then a United States senator from Georgia, had opposed his state's secession from the Union. But once Georgia joined the Confederacy, Stephens transferred his loyalty to the Southern cause. Almost immediately elected vice president of the new nation, Stephens dominated the Constitutional Convention, which drafted the Confederacy's governing document. In the following speech, delivered in



Savannah, Georgia, on March 21, 1861, Stephens explained the new constitution's guiding principles.

### Questions to Consider

- In what ways, according to Stephens, is the new constitution superior to that of the United States?
- How significant is slavery to the new Confederate States?

I was remarking that we are passing through one of the greatest revolutions in the annals of the world—seven States have, within the last three months, thrown off an old Government and formed a new. This revolution has been signally marked, up to this time, by the fact of its having been accomplished without the loss of a single drop of blood. [Applause.]...

In reference to [the new Constitution], I make this first general remark: It amply secures all our ancient rights, franchises, and privileges.... No citizen is deprived of life, liberty, or property, but by the judgment of his peers, under the laws of the land.... All the essentials of the old Constitution, which have endeared it to the hearts of the American people, have been preserved and perpetuated. [Applause.]...

Allow me briefly to allude to some of these improvements. The question of building up class interests, or fostering one branch of industry to the prejudice of another, under the exercise of the revenue power, which gave us so much trouble under the old Constitution, is put at rest forever under the new. We allow the imposition of no duty with a view of giving advantage to one class of persons, in any trade or business, over those of another. All, under our system, stand upon the same broad principles of perfect equality. Honest labor and enterprise are left free and unrestricted in whatever pursuit they may be engaged in....

This old thorn of the tariff, which occasioned the cause of so much irritation in the old body politic, is removed forever from the new. [Applause.] Again, the subject of internal improvements, under the power of Congress to regulate commerce, is put at rest under our system.... The true principle is to subject commerce of every locality to whatever burdens may be necessary to facilitate it. If the Charleston harbor needs improve-

ment, let the commerce of Charleston bear the burden.... This is again the broad principle of perfect equality and justice. [Applause.] And it is specially held forth and established in our new Constitution....

...[T]he new Constitution has put at rest forever all the agitating questions relating to our peculiar institutions—African slavery as it exists among us—the proper status of the negro in our form of civilization. *This was the immediate cause of the late rupture and present revolution.* JEFFERSON, in his forecast, had anticipated this, as the “rock upon which the old Union would split.” He was right. What was conjecture with him, is now a realized fact. But whether he fully comprehended the great truth upon which that rock stood and stands, may be doubted. *The prevailing ideas entertained by him and most of the leading statesmen at the time of the formation of the old Constitution were, that the enslavement of the African was in violation of the laws of nature; that it was wrong in principle, socially, morally and politically.* It was an evil they knew not well how to deal with; but the general opinion of the men of that day was, that, somehow or other, in the order of Providence, the institution would be evanescent and pass away.... The Constitution, it is true, secured every essential guarantee to the institution while it should last, and hence no argument can be justly used against the constitutional guarantees thus secured, because of the common sentiment of the day. *Those ideas, however, were fundamentally wrong. They rested upon the assumption of the equality of races. This was an error.* It was a sandy foundation, and the idea of a Government built upon it—when the “storm came and the wind blew, it fell.”

*Our new Government is founded upon exactly the opposite ideas; its foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery, subordination to the superior race, is his natural and moral condition.* [Applause.] *This, our new Government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth. This truth has been slow in the process of its development, like all*

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Source: Frank Moore, ed., *The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events* (New York, 1861), Vol. 1 (Supplement 1864), Documents Section: pp. 44–46.

other truths in the various departments of science.... Those at the North who still cling to these errors with a zeal above knowledge, we justly denominate fanatics. All fanaticism springs from an aberration of the mind; from a defect in reasoning. It is a species of insanity. One of the most striking characteristics of insanity, in many instances, is, forming correct conclusions from fancied or erroneous premises; so with the *anti-slavery* fanatics: their conclusions are right if their premises are. They assume that the negro is equal, and hence conclude that he is entitled to equal privileges and rights, with the white man. If their premises were correct, their conclusions would be logical and just; but their premises being wrong, their whole argument fails.... They were attempting to make things equal which the Creator had made unequal....

...Many Governments have been founded upon the principles of certain classes; but the classes thus enslaved, were of the same race, and in violation of the laws of nature. Our system commits no such violation of nature's laws. The negro by nature, or by the curse against Canaan, is fitted for that condition which he occupies in our system. The architect, in the construction of buildings, lays the foundation with the proper material—the granite—then comes the brick or the marble. The substratum of our society is made of the material fitted by nature for it, and by experience we know that it is the best, not only for the superior but for the inferior race, that it should be so. It is, indeed, in conformity with the Creator. *It is not for us to inquire into the wisdom of His ordinances or to question them.* For His own purposes He has made one race to differ from another....

## 27

## Fast Day Sermons (1861)

B. M. PALMER and  
M. J. RAPHAEL and  
HENRY WARD BEECHER

As the secession crisis came to a head in December 1860, President James Buchanan called upon the nation's ministers to lead their congregations in a day of fasting on January 4, 1861. The president also asked the ministers of all denominations to address the religious context of the nation's probable dissolution. Dozens of these sermons were published, and one New York publisher rushed a collection into print just before the opening shots at Fort Sumter. Every sermon collected in this volume identified slavery as the core of the crisis, and all, whether North or South, also maintained that the issue was one that touched on the very heart of spiritual morality. The three selections below could not be more divergent in their evaluation of the moral duty of their congregations. Reverend B. M. Palmer of New Orleans was one of the leading Presbyterians of the Southern group of that denomination, which had divided bitterly over the issue of slavery in 1837. Rabbi M. J. Raphael presided over the historic Jewish Synagogue of New York and sought some middle ground that would acknowledge slavery and preserve the union. Henry Ward Beecher, minister to the prestigious Plymouth Church of Brooklyn, was one of the most prominent churchmen in the United States, famous for his acid denunciation of slavery.



### Questions to Consider

- Were these theological divisions irreconcilable?
- Does the Bible condemn or support the institution of slavery?
- According to each of these ministers, what was the moral responsibility of a religious person in January 1861?

## Slavery a Divine Trust: Duty of the South to Preserve and Perpetuate It

Rev. B. M. Palmer

...In determining our duty in this emergency, it is necessary that we should first ascertain the nature of the trust providentially committed to us.... The particular trust assigned to such a people becomes the pledge of Divine protection, and their fidelity to it determines the fate by which it is finally overtaken.... If, then, the South is such a people, what, at this juncture, is their providential trust? I answer, that it is *to conserve and to perpetuate the institution of slavery as now existing*.... My own conviction is, that we should at once lift ourselves, intelligently, to the highest moral ground, and proclaim to all the world that we hold this trust from God....

The argument which enforces the solemnity of this providential trust is simple and condensed. It is bound upon us, then, by the *principle of self-preservation*, that "first law" which is continually asserting its supremacy over others. Need I pause to show how this system of servitude underlies and supports our material interests? That our wealth consists in our lands, and in the serfs who till them? That from the nature of our products they can only be cultivated by labor which must be controlled in order to be certain? That any other than a tropical race must faint and wither beneath a tropical sun? Need I pause to show how this system is interwoven with our entire social fabric? That these slaves form parts of our households, even as our children; and that, too, through a relationship recognized and sanctioned in the scriptures of God even as the other?... How, then, can the hand of violence be laid upon it without involving our existence?...

This duty is bound upon us again *as the constituted guardians of the slaves themselves*. Our lot is not more implicated in theirs, than is their lot in ours; in our mutual relations we survive or perish together. The worst foes of the black race are those who have intermeddled on their behalf. We know better than others that every at-

tribute of their character fits them for dependence and servitude. By nature, the most affectionate and loyal of all races beneath the sun, they are also the most helpless; and no calamity can befall them greater than the loss of that protection they enjoy under this patriarchal system.... Freedom would be their doom; and equally from both they call upon us, their providential guardians, to be protected....

It is a duty which we owe... *to the civilized world*. It is a remarkable fact, that during these thirty years of unceasing warfare against slavery, and while a lying spirit has inflamed the world against us, that world has grown more and more dependent upon it for sustenance and wealth.... Strike now a blow at this system of labor, and the world itself totters at the stroke....

Last of all, in this great struggle, *we defend the cause of God and religion*. The Abolition spirit is undeniably atheistic.... Among a people so generally religious as the American, a disguise must be worn; but it is the same old threadbare disguise of the advocacy of human rights.... Availing itself of the morbid and misdirected sympathies of men, it has entrapped weak consciences in the meshes of its treachery; and now, at last, has seated its high-priest upon the throne, clad in the black garments of discord and schism, so symbolic of its ends. Under this specious cry of reform, it demands that every evil shall be corrected, or society become a wreck—the sun must be stricken from the heavens, if a spot is found on his disk....

The position of the South is at this moment sublime. If she has grace given her to know her hour, she will save herself, the country, and the world....

### Bible View of Slavery

Rabbi M. J. Raphall

...The New Testament nowhere, directly or indirectly, condemns slaveholding, which, indeed, is proved by the universal practice of all Christian nations during many centuries. Receiving slavery as one of the conditions of society, the New Testament nowhere interferes with or contradicts the slave code of Moses.... And when we next refer to...our own sacred Scriptures, we

Source: *Fast Day Sermons: Or the Pulpit on the State of the Country* (New York, 1861), pp. 57–79, 235–245, 265–280.

find that on the most solemn occasion therein recorded, when God gave the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai...slaveholding is not only recognised and sanctioned as an integral part of the social structure, when it is commanded that the Sabbath of the Lord is to bring rest to... "Thy male slave and thy female slave " (Exod. xx. 10; Deut. v. 14). But the property in slaves is placed under the same protection as any other species of lawful property, when it is said, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, or his field, or his male slave, or his female slave, or his ox, or his ass, or aught that belongeth to thy neighbor." (Ibid. xx. 17; v. 21)... That the Ten Commandments are the word of God, and as such, of the very highest authority, is acknowledged by Christians as well as by Jews. I would therefore ask the reverend gentleman of Brooklyn and his compeers—How dare you, in the face of the sanction and protection afforded to slave property in the Ten Commandments—how dare you denounce slaveholding as a sin? When you remember that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job—the men with whom the Almighty conversed...and to whom He vouchsafed to give the character of "perfect, upright, fearing God and eschewing evil" (Job i. 8)—that all these men were slaveholders, does it not strike you that you are guilty of something very little short of blasphemy? And if you answer me, "Oh, in their time slaveholding was lawful, but now it has become a sin," I in my turn ask you, "When and by what authority you draw the line? Tell us the precise time when slaveholding ceased to be permitted, and became sinful?" When we remember the mischief which this inventing a new sin, not known to the Bible, is causing; how it has exasperated the feelings of the South, and alarmed the conscience of the North, to a degree that men who should be brothers are on the point of imbruing their hands in each other's blood, are we not entitled to ask the reverend preacher of Brooklyn, "What right have you to insult and exasperate thousands of God-fearing, law-abiding citizens, whose moral worth and patriotism, whose purity of conscience and of life, are fully equal to your own?..."

## Peace, Be Still

Reverend Henry Ward Beecher

...The sins of a nation are always the sins of certain central passions. In one age they break out in one way, and in another age in another way; but they are the same

central sins, after all. The corrupt passions which lead in the Southern States to all the gigantic evils of slavery, in Northern cities break out in other forms, not less guilty before God, because of a less public nature. The same thing that leads to the oppression of the operative, leads to oppression on the plantation. The grinding of the poor, the advantages which capital takes of labor, the oppression of the farm, the oppression of the road, the oppression of the shop, the oppression of the ship, are all of the same central nature, and as guilty before God as the more systematic and overt oppressions of the plantation. It is the old human heart that sins, always, North or South; and the nature of pride and of dishonesty are universal. Therefore we have our own account to render....

...I should violate my own convictions, if, in the presence of more nearly present and more exciting influences, I should neglect to mention the sins of this nation against the Indian, who, as much as the slave, is dumb, but who, unlike the slave, has almost none to think of him, and to speak of his wrongs....

Nor is this confined to the Indian. The Mexicans have felt the same rude foot. This nation has employed its gigantic strength with almost no moral restriction. Our civilization has not begotten humanity and respect for others' rights, nor a spirit of protection to the weak....

...But I am now come to the most alarming and most fertile cause of national sin—slavery....

We who dwell in the North are not without responsibility for this sin. Its wonderful growth, and the arrogance of its claims, have been in part through our delinquency. And our business to-day is not to find fault with the South, I am not discussing this matter with reference to them at all, but only with reference to our own individual profit. Because the South loved money, they augmented this evil; and because the North loved money, and that quiet which befits industry and commerce, she has refused to insist upon her moral convictions, in days past, and yielded to every demand, carrying slavery forward in this nation. You and I are guilty of the spread of slavery unless we have exerted, normally and legitimately, every influence in our power against it.... It has been one gigantic bargain, only working out in different ways, North and South. It is for us just as much as for them that the slave works; and we acquiesce.... Our looms and our factories are largely built on the slave's bones. We live on his labor....

...The whole nation is guilty....



## 28

# *Southern View of the Emancipation Proclamation (1863)*

J E F F E R S O N   D A V I S

On the first day of 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, liberating all slaves in those territories still under rebel control. In the following message to the Congress of the Confederate states, President Jefferson Davis heaped scorn on Lincoln and threatened to turn all union officers over to the states for prosecution as instigators of slave rebellion, for which the standard punishment was death. Davis never carried through on his threat.

## Questions to Consider

- In what way is the Proclamation proof of a Republican conspiracy?
- Why does Davis believe that the emancipation of the slaves threatens the lives of both whites and blacks?

## Richmond, January 12, 1863

The public journals of the North have been received, containing a proclamation, dated on the 1st day of the present month, signed by the President of the United States, in which he orders and declares all slaves within ten of the States of the Confederacy to be free, except such as are found within certain districts now occupied in part by the armed forces of the enemy. We may well leave it to the instincts of that common humanity which a beneficent Creator has implanted in the breasts of our fellowmen of all countries to pass judgment on a measure by which several millions of human beings of an inferior race, peaceful and contented laborers in their sphere, are doomed to extermination, while at the same time they are encouraged to a general assassination of their masters by the insidious recommendation "to ab-

stain from violence unless in necessary self-defense." Our own detestation of those who have attempted the most execrable measure recorded in the history of guilty man is tempered by profound contempt for the impotent rage which it discloses. So far as regards the action of this Government on such criminals as may attempt its execution, I confine myself to informing you that I shall, unless in your wisdom you deem some other course more expedient, deliver to the several State authorities all commissioned officers of the United States that may hereafter be captured by our forces in any of the States embraced in the proclamation, that they may be dealt with in accordance with the laws of those States providing for the punishment of criminals engaged in exciting servile insurrection. The enlisted soldiers I shall continue to treat as unwilling instruments in the commission of these crimes, and shall direct their discharge and return to their homes on the proper and usual parole.

In its political aspect this measure possesses great significance, and to it in this light I invite your atten-

Source: James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Confederacy* (Nashville, 1906), 1: pp. 290–293.

tion. It affords to our whole people the complete and crowning proof of the true nature of the designs of the party which elevated to power the present occupant of the Presidential chair at Washington and which sought to conceal its purpose by every variety of artful device and by the perfidious use of the most solemn and repeated pledges on every possible occasion. I extract in this connection as a single example the following declaration, made by President Lincoln under the solemnity of his oath as Chief Magistrate of the United States, on the 4th of March, 1861:

Apprehension seems to exist among the people of the Southern States that by the accession of a Republican Administration their property and their peace and personal security are to be endangered. There has never been any reasonable cause for such apprehension. Indeed, the most ample evidence to the contrary has all the while existed and been open to their inspection. It is found in nearly all the published speeches of him who now addresses you. I do but quote from one of those speeches when I declare that I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so; and I have no inclination to do so. Those who nominated and elected me did so with full knowledge that I had made this and many similar declarations and had never recanted them; and more than this, they placed in the platform for my acceptance and as a law to themselves and to me the clear and emphatic resolution which I now read:

*"Resolved, That the maintenance inviolate of the rights of the States, and especially the right of each State to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively, is essential to that balance of power on which the perfection and endurance of our political fabric depend; and we denounce the lawless invasion by armed force of the soil of any State or Territory, no matter under what pretext, as among the gravest of crimes."*

Nor was this declaration of the want of power or disposition to interfere with our social system confined to a state of peace. Both before and after the actual commencement of hostilities the President of the United States repeated in formal official communication to the Cabinets of Great Britain and France that he was utterly

without constitutional power to do the act which he has just committed, and that in no possible event, whether the secession of these States resulted in the establishment of a separate Confederacy or in the restoration of the Union, was there any authority by virtue of which he could either restore a disaffected State to the Union by force of arms or make any changes in any of its institutions. I refer especially for verification of this assertion to the dispatches addressed by the Secretary of State of the United States, under direction of the President, to the Ministers of the United States at London and Paris, under date of 10th and 22d of April, 1861.

The people of this Confederacy, then, cannot fail to receive this proclamation as the fullest vindication of their own sagacity in foreseeing the uses to which the dominant party in the United States intended from the beginning to apply their power, nor can they cease to remember with devout thankfulness that it is to their own vigilance in resisting the first stealthy progress of approaching despotism that they owe their escape from consequences now apparent to the most skeptical. This proclamation will have another salutary effect in calming the fears of those who have constantly evinced the apprehension that this war might end by some reconstruction of the old Union or some renewal of close political relations with the United States. These fears have never been shared by me, nor have I ever been able to perceive on what basis they could rest. But the proclamation affords the fullest guarantee of the impossibility of such a result; it has established a state of things which can lead to but one of three possible consequences—the extermination of the slaves, the exile of the whole white population from the Confederacy, or absolute and total separation of these States from the United States.

This proclamation is also an authentic statement by the Government of the United States of its inability to subjugate the South by force of arms, and as such must be accepted by neutral nations, which can no longer find any justification in withholding our just claims to formal recognition. It is also in effect an intimation to the people of the North that they must prepare to submit to a separation, now become inevitable, for that people are too acute not to understand a restoration of the Union has been rendered forever impossible by the adoption of a measure which from its very nature neither admits of retraction nor can coexist with union.



## 29

# The Battle of Atlanta (1864)

DAVID P. CONYNGHAM

William Tecumseh Sherman had a clear vision of how to end the Civil War: destroy the Confederacy's ability to continue the war, which he understood to include both material and psychological capacities. To achieve his goal, Sherman proposed to drive through the heart of the Confederate states, capture Atlanta, the rail and production center of the deep South, and advance to the Atlantic, destroying everything of value in his path. By completely disrupting the Southern economy, Sherman thought to diminish the Southerners' will to fight. Sherman simply ignored every effort by his opponents to make him turn about and fight. He cut himself free from his lines of supply and communication and focused on forcing the enemy to come to or flee before him. The following account of Sherman's successful campaign is by David P. Conyngham, a reporter with the New York *Herald* who traveled with Sherman's army.

## Questions to Consider

- What options did the Confederates have in response to Sherman's strategy?
- Why does Conyngham find significance in the fraternization of Union and Confederate troops?

In the beginning of August, the fighting around Atlanta had settled down to a regular siege. Every day had its skirmishing, its artillery duels, and an assault and repulse. Like another Troy, the enemy fought outside their walls and intrenchments, and many an amusing combat took place, particularly between the skirmishers. I have often seen a rebel and a Federal soldier making right for the same rifle-pit, their friends on both sides loudly cheering them on. As they would not have time to fight, they reserved their fire

until they got into the pit, when woe betide the laggard, for the other was sure to pop him as soon as he got into cover. Sometimes they got in together, and then came the tug of war; for they fought for possession with their bayonets and closed fists. In some cases, however, they made a truce, and took joint possession of it.

It was no unusual thing to see our pickets and skirmishers enjoying themselves very comfortably with the rebels, drinking bad whiskey, smoking and chewing worse tobacco, and trading coffee and other little articles. The rebels had no coffee, and our men plenty, while the rebels had plenty of whiskey; so they very soon came to an understanding. It was strange to see these men, who had been just pitted in deadly conflict, trading, and bantering, and chatting, as if they were the best friends in the world. They discussed a battle with

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Source: David P. Conyngham, *Sherman's March Through the South, with Sketches and Incidents of the Campaign* (New York, 1865), pp. 198–201, 207–212.

the same gusto they would a cock-fight, or horse-race, and made inquiries about their friends, as to who was killed, and who not, in the respective armies. Friends that have been separated for years have met in this way. Brothers who parted to try their fortune have often met on the picket line, or on the battle-field. I once met a German soldier with the head of a dying rebel on his lap. The stern veteran was weeping, whilst the boy on his knee looked pityingly into his face. They were speaking in German, and from my poor knowledge of the language, all I could make out was, that they were brothers; that the elder had come out here several years before; the younger followed him, and being informed that he was in Macon, he went in search of him, and got conscripted; while the elder brother, who was in the north all the time, joined our army. The young boy was scarcely twenty, with light hair, and a soft, fair complexion. The pallor of death was on his brow, and the blood was flowing from his breast, and gurgled in his throat and mouth, which the other wiped away with his handkerchief. When he could speak, the dying youth's conversation was of the old home in Germany, of his brothers and sisters, and dear father and mother, who were never to see him again.

In those improvised truces, the best possible faith was observed by the men. These truces were brought about chiefly in the following manner. A rebel, who was heartily tired of his crippled position in his pit, would call out, "I say, Yank!"

"Well, Johnny Reb," would echo from another hole or tree.

"I'm going to put out my head; don't shoot."

"Well, I won't."

The reb would pop up his head; the Yank would do the same.

"Hain't you got any coffee, Johnny?"

"Na'r a bit, but plenty of rot-gut."

"All right; we'll have a trade."

They would meet, while several others would follow the example, until there would be a regular bartering mart established. In some cases the men would come to know each other so well, that they would often call out,—

"Look out, reb; we're going to shoot," or, "Look out, Yank, we're going to shoot," as the case may be.

On one occasion the men were holding a friendly *r union* of this sort, when a rebel major came down in a great fury, and ordered the men back. As they were going back, he ordered them to fire on the Federals. They refused, as they had made a truce. The major swore and stormed, and in his rage he snatched the gun from one of his men, and fired at a Federal soldier, wounding him. A cry of execration at such a breach of

faith rose from all the men, and they called out, "Yanks, we couldn't help it." At night these men deserted into our lines, assigning as a reason, that they could not with honor serve any longer in an army that thus violated private truces....

Our heavy shelling was regularly replied to by the enemy, who revealed some heavy guns. I weighed one projectile; it weighed sixty-four pounds. It had plunged in among our tents at General Thomas J. Wood's headquarters, but fortunately did not burst, but made a regular fuss and scare, kicking up a whole lot of puddle; in fact, conducting itself like a miniature volcano.

General Sherman, finding that the right of the army of the Tennessee did not extend to the Western Railroad, ordered General Schofield to shift from the extreme left to the right.... The aim of these movements was to get possession of the railroad between Atlanta and East Point. This accomplished, Atlanta should fall. Right before us, within a few miles of our lines, almost within reach of our guns, runs this great life artery of the rebel city. Once cut this jugular vein, and Atlanta speedily falls. Sherman knew this well, and therefore turned all his attention to it; the rebels knew it well, and therefore were exceedingly vigilant and active to resist all our attempts upon it. They left their strong works to be guarded by the militia and conscripts, and followed up our movements with the utmost promptness and daring. It was evident now that the battle would not come off before Atlanta. Perhaps Sherman could take it by direct assault; but we had learned that assaults were always costly, even when successful. Sherman was cautious and wary, pushing his skirmishers everywhere, beating all bushes, and suspicious nooks and dells. Hood, on the other hand, was watchful to counteract any movement of his wily foe. It was a great game of chess. Hood had castled, and Sherman moved to checkmate him. This had continued so long that we were tired of it; so the indication of a new move on Sherman's part was hailed with delight....

The works which Johnston had built around Atlanta, during his slow but masterly retreat, were of the most formidable character and strength. It was truly a city of intrenchments and fortifications.

For some time it became apparent to Sherman that he could not take them by direct assault, and also that the Western Railroad was too well guarded to be effectually destroyed by cavalry raids, or casual attempts....

Sherman's purpose now was to deprive Hood of this strength, and the protection of his works, by compelling him to take the field, or suffer his supplies to be totally cut off. Hood, then, had no alternative. He should come out and fight; and in a regular battle, the chances were largely in favor of our veteran troops....



Hood was now at Atlanta himself, and looking on Sherman's evacuation as a retreat, he sent a detachment of cavalry to reconnoitre, which soon struck against Slocum, and got well beaten.

The citizens all rushed out to see our abandoned works, and congratulated one another on their supposed victory. Rifle-pits, intrenchments, and old camps were eagerly examined and souvenirs brought home....

Hood soon awoke from his fancied victory, but it was too late....

At about 4 o'clock in the afternoon the rebels attacked Howard's position. Their chief assault was on the 2d division, 15th corps, now commanded by Brigadier General Hazen....

Hazen's division met the assault with firmness, repulsed the enemy, and took possession of a hill which commanded Jonesboro', and might be justly called the key of the position....

During the night the enemy, finding it impossible to hold Jonesboro', retreated along the Macon road in a southerly direction, and took up a position at Lovejoy's Station, seven miles from Jonesboro', and twenty-nine miles from Atlanta...

As soon as Hood discovered Sherman's real object, he at once saw that his position was untenable; and on

the night of the 1st September he blew up all the magazines and ammunition, destroyed all the supplies he could not remove, comprising eight locomotives, and near one hundred cars laden with ammunition, small arms, and stores, and then retreated. Next morning General Slocum sent forward detachments from Ward's, Geary's, and Williams's divisions on a reconnoissance.

On advancing near the city they met no resistance. Finally, observing that it was evacuated, they entered it about 11 o'clock, on the morning of September 2, 1864. They were met outside by a deputation, comprising the mayor, Mr. Calhoun, the high sheriff, and some of the most respectable citizens, who made a formal surrender of the city to General Ward, simply making the following request:—

BRIGADIER GENERAL WARD, 3D DIVISION, 20TH A. C.

SIR: The fortune of war has placed the city of Atlanta in your hands. As Mayor of this city I ask protection for non-combatants and private property.

JAMES M. CALHOUN,

*Mayor of Atlanta.*

## 30

# *The Wade-Davis Plan (1864)*

B E N J A M I N F . W A D E   a n d  
H E N R Y W . D A V I S

By 1864 it was fairly obvious that the Union would eventually defeat the Confederacy. The question then became how to treat the Southern states when they were restored to the Union. Republicans considered secession to be illegal, implying that the states had never actually left the Union. If that logic held, then Congress could not very well impose criteria on Southern states before accepting their representatives. Abraham Lincoln followed this reasoning in his Amnesty Proclamation of December 1863, promising presidential recognition of state governments that recognized the end of slavery and where ten percent of the 1860

voters swore allegiance to the U.S. government. But Congress felt that it, and not the president, held the authority to recognize states, new or returning. Benjamin Wade of Ohio and Henry Davis of Maryland expressed this view in legislation that passed Congress on July 4, 1864. Lincoln refused to sign the bill into law, effecting a "pocket veto." The debate over who should "reconstruct" the South continued for the next five years.

### Questions to Consider

- How does the Congressional plan differ from Lincoln's Amnesty Proclamation?
- Is the Wade-Davis Bill as harsh as Lincoln charged?

### An Act to guarantee to certain States whose governments have been usurped or overthrown a republican form of government.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That in the States declared in rebellion against the United States the President shall, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, appoint for each a provisional governor...who shall be charged with the civil administration of such State until a State government therein shall be recognized as hereinafter provided.*

SEC. 2. *And be it further enacted, That so soon as the military resistance to the United States shall have been suppressed in any such State and the people thereof shall have sufficiently returned to their obedience to the Constitution and the laws of the United States the provisional governor shall...enroll all white male citizens of the United States...and...request each one to take the oath to support the Constitution of the United States,...and if the persons taking that oath shall amount to a majority of the persons enrolled in the State, he shall, by proclamation, invite the loyal people of the State to elect delegates to a convention charged to declare the will of the people of the State relative to the reestablishment of a State government, subject to and in*

*conformity with the Constitution of the United States....*

SEC. 5.... [E]very person known by or proved to the commissioners to have held or exercised any office, civil or military, State or Confederate, under the rebel usurpation, or to have voluntarily borne arms against the United States, shall be excluded though he offer to take the oath....

SEC. 7. *And be it further enacted, That the convention shall declare on behalf of the people of the State their submission to the Constitution and laws of the United States, and shall adopt the following provisions...and incorporate them in the constitution of the State...*

First. No person who has held or exercised any office, civil or military (except offices merely ministerial and military offices below the grade of colonel), State or Confederate, under the usurping power, shall vote for or be a member of the legislature or governor.

Second. Involuntary servitude is forever prohibited, and the freedom of all persons is guaranteed in said State.

Third. No debt, State or Confederate, created by or under the sanction of the usurping power shall be recognized or paid by the State....

SEC. 9. *And be it further enacted, That if the convention shall refuse to reestablish the State government on the conditions aforesaid the provisional governor shall declare it dissolved....*

SEC. 14. *And be it further enacted, That every person who shall hereafter hold or exercise any office, civil or military (except offices merely ministerial and military offices below the grade of colonel), in the rebel service, State or Confederate, is hereby declared not to be a citizen of the United States.*

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Source: James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1787-1897* (Washington, D.C., 1896), 6: pp. 223-226.



## 31

# An Appeal from Southern Blacks (1865)

## THE CONVENTION OF THE COLORED PEOPLE OF VIRGINIA

With the Civil War's end, the expectations of the newly freed people of the South ran high. But those hopes of true freedom vanished as Southern whites moved to reestablish racial inequality and white supremacy. On August 5, 1865, a convention of the freedmen of Virginia issued an address to the nation, calling for the fulfillment of the promise of American democracy. They received no response.

### Questions to Consider

- Why was it necessary for American citizens to petition for the protection of their basic rights?
- What did this convention ask of their government?

### An Address

#### *To the Loyal Citizens and Congress of the United States of America*

We, the undersigned members of a Convention of colored citizens of the State of Virginia, would respectfully represent that, although we have been held as slaves, and denied all recognition as a constituent of your nationality for almost the entire period of the duration of your Government, and that by *your permission* we have been denied either home or country and deprived of the dearest rights of human nature; yet when you and our immediate oppressors met in deadly conflict upon the field of battle—the one to destroy and the other to save your Government and nationality, *we*, with scarce an exception, in our inmost souls espoused your cause, and watched, and prayed, and waited, and labored for *your* success....

When the contest waxed long, and the result hung doubtfully, you appealed to us for help, and how well we answered is written in the rosters of the two hundred thousand colored troops now enrolled in your service; and as to our undying devotion to your cause, let the uniform acclamation of escaped prisoners, “when-ever we saw a black face, we felt sure of a friend,” answer.

Well, the war is over, the rebellion is “put down” and we are *declared* free! Four fifths of our enemies are paroled or amnestied, and the other fifth are being pardoned, and the President has, in his efforts at the reconstruction of the civil government of the States, late in rebellion, left us entirely at the mercy of these subjugated but unconverted rebels, in *everything* save the privilege of bringing us, our wives and little ones, to the auction block. He has, so far as we can understand the tendency and bearing of his action in the case, remitted us for all our civil rights, to men, a majority of whom regard *our devotion to your cause and flag* as that which decided the contest against them! This we regard as destructive of all we hold dear, and in the name of God, of justice, of humanity, of good faith, of truth and righteousness, we do most solemnly and earnestly

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Source: *Proceedings of the Convention of Colored People of Virginia, Held in the City of Alexandria* (Alexandria, VA, 1865), p. 21.

protest. Men and Brethren, in the hour of your peril, you called upon us, and despite all time-honored *interpretation of constitutional obligations*, we came at your call and you are saved; and now we beg, we pray, we entreat you *not* to desert us in this, *the hour of our peril*.

We *know* these men—know them *well*—and we assure you that, with the majority of them, loyalty is only “lip deep,” and that their professions of loyalty are used as a cover to the cherished design of getting restored to their former relations with the Federal Government, and then, by all sorts of “unfriendly legislation,” to ren-

der the freedom you have given us more intolerable than the slavery they intended for us.

We warn you in time that our only safety is in keeping them under Governors of the *military persuasion* until you have so amended the Federal Constitution that it will prohibit the States from making any distinction between citizens on account of race or color. In one word, the only salvation for us besides the power of the Government, is in the *possession of the ballot*. Give us this, and we will protect ourselves....







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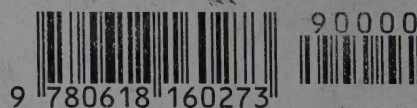
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